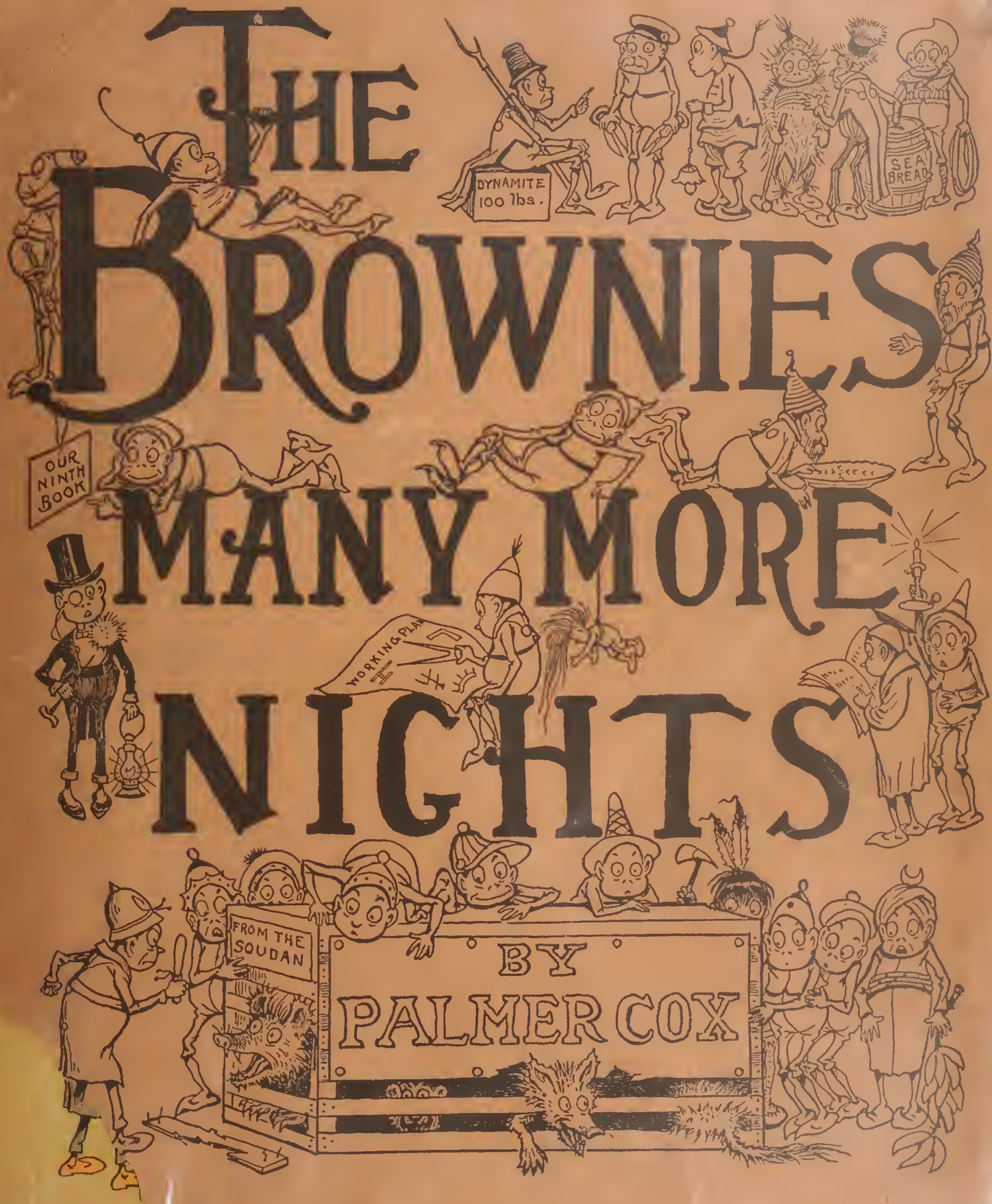
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BY

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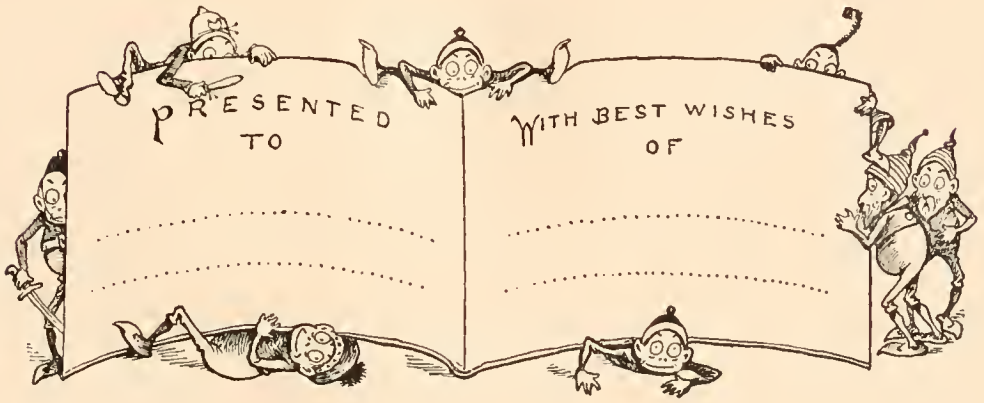
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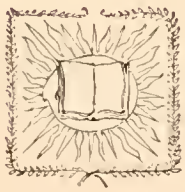
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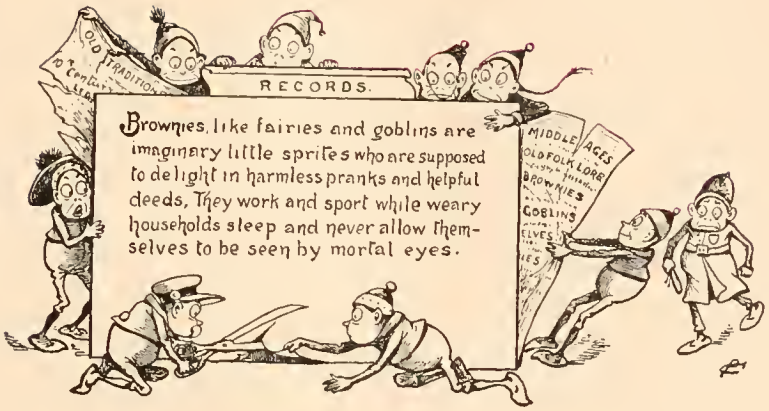
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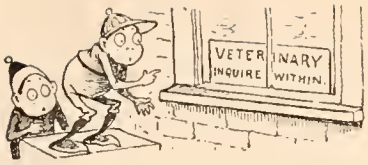
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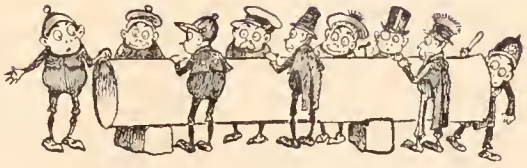
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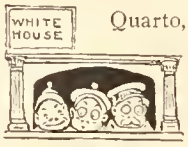
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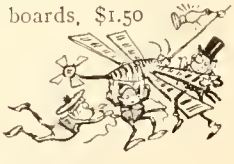
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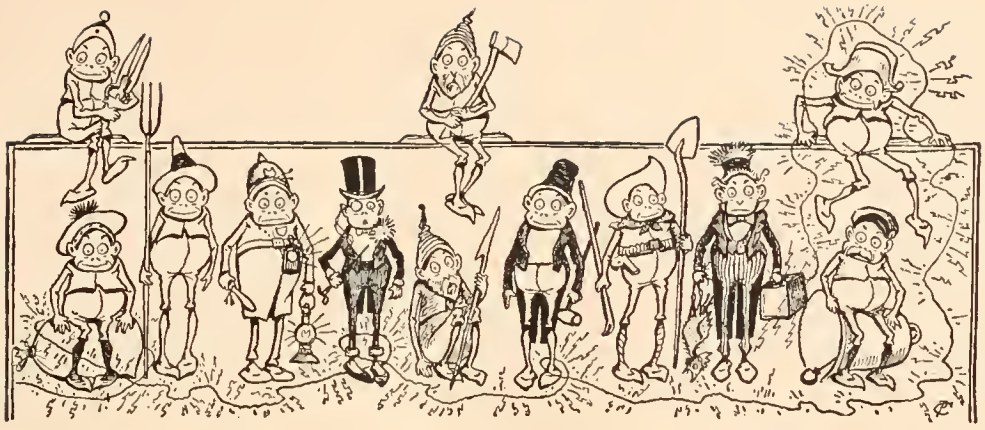
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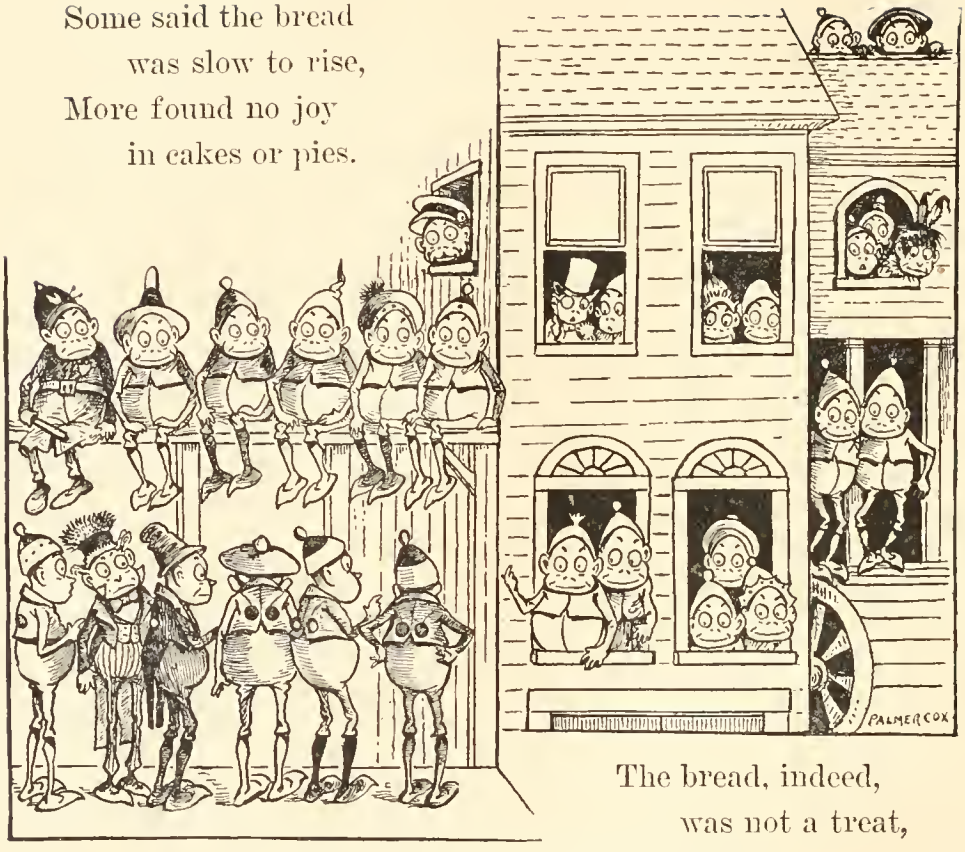
AROUND the mill the Brownies strode
Where wheels were still,
though water flowed.
Said one: "A labor strike, I fear,
Has made it so deserted here;
And, on the belts that now
should run,
The crafty spider's web
is spun."
Another said: "That 's not
the case.
The miller here has quit
the place
Because complaints of lack
of skill
Were piled much higher than the mill.



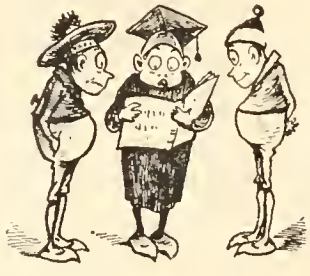


To laugh alone may
selfish seem,
Let someone join you
in the scream.

Some said the bread
was slow to rise,
More found no joy
in cakes or pies.

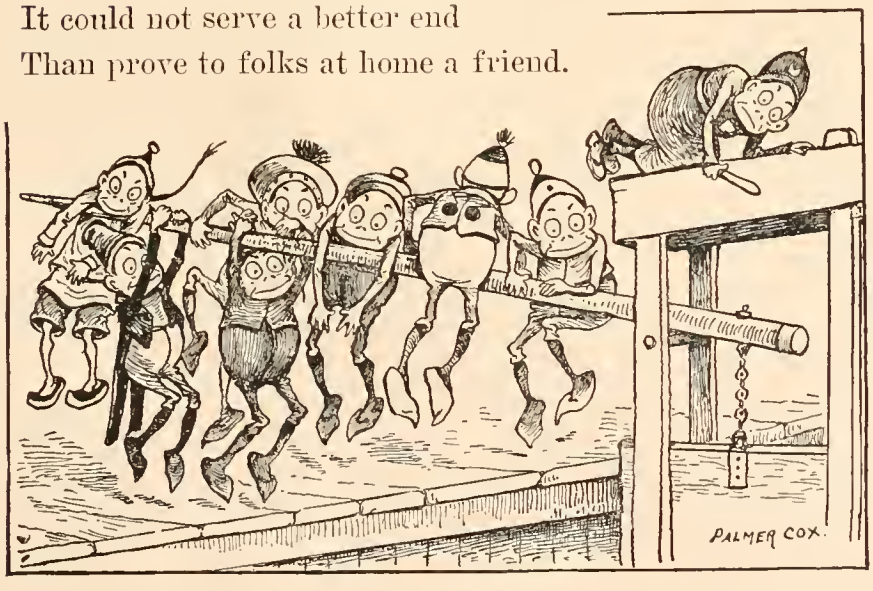


The bread, indeed,
was not a treat,
For frost had spoiled the farmer's wheat,
But, that the flour might go round,
The wheat must in the mill be ground.
The corn, no better as a crop,
Refused to ripen, or to pop;
And so the children felt their share
Of hardship and misfortune there.
The hopper must take up its clack,—
We 'll bring the hum of business back,
And stir the spider in her net;
We 've several hours to midnight yet.





It is, you know, the time of year
For puddings, cakes, and all good cheer,
When pies should from the oven slide,
A father's joy, a mother's pride,
To nothing say of younger eyes,
Where quality gives way to size,
And criticisms as to make
Rest easy on both pie and cake.
No second-rate, makeshift affair
Should in the face of diners stare,
But something that would praise inspire,
And make one edge the table nigher.
We 'll find the grain, in cars around,
That to some foreign land is bound;
It could not serve a better end
Than prove to folks at home a friend.



The Chinamen can boil their rice,
And Filipinos live on mice,—



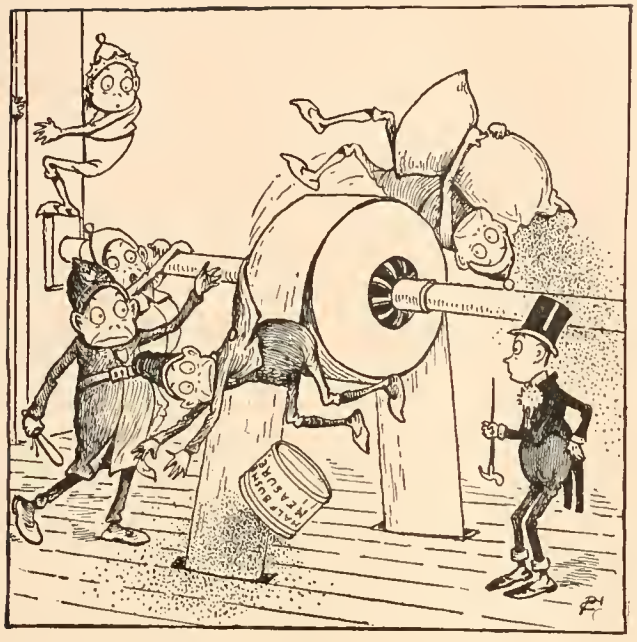
(We understand that naught can run
Around on legs beneath the sun,
Or crawl about in sand or clay,
But to their kettles finds its way.)
Let work in which we 'll take delight
Now occupy our time to-night."
Another cried: "We 'll start the mill,
And set things moving with a will.
We 've but to let the water go
Upon the wooden wheel below,
And everything that rests above
Will get a most decided shove;



For water that goes bubbling by
Contains a power that makes things fly.
The belts will then commence their race,
As though to find a hiding-place,
The idle cogs begin to mesh,
And start each other's work afresh,
And soon you 'll hear the rumbling sound
The miller hears the season round."
Some ran for oil with eager zeal,
And with it eased the whirring wheel.

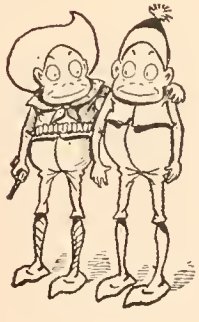


'T is not in love, nor hate, nor bliss,
To change some natures made amiss.

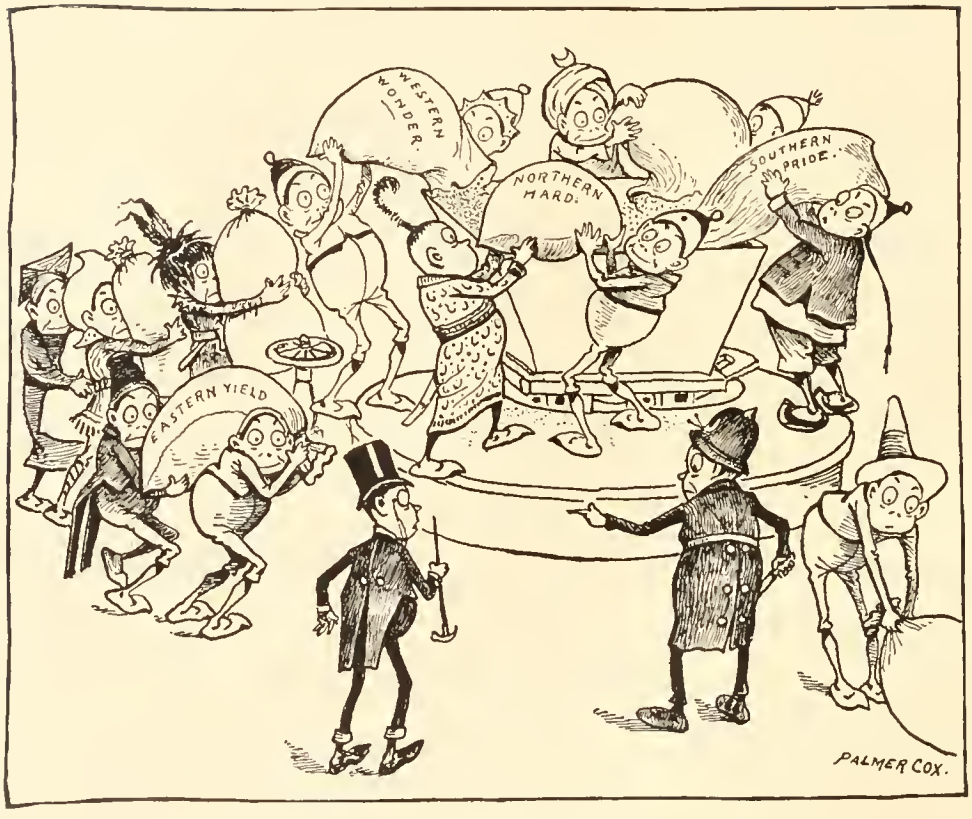


Though some was lost
through leaky cans,
'T was not enough
to spoil their plans,
And rusty bearings
here and there
Ran as if cushioned
on the air.
The mill, with heavy
post and beam,
That stood half-way
across the stream,
Was made to start
at dead of night,
Before the touch of
Brownies bright;

For they knew how the gate to raise
As if they 'd done it all their days;
Could shake the bolt, and pick the stone,
And run the business as their own.
United effort was required
To raise the gate as they desired,
But let alone the Brownie band
To carry out a scheme as planned!
Unfinished work is seldom found
Behind the sprites when day comes round.
It may take strength, it may take weight,
It may take action more than great,
But gates will rise, and floods will flow,
And wheels will turn, as well we know.



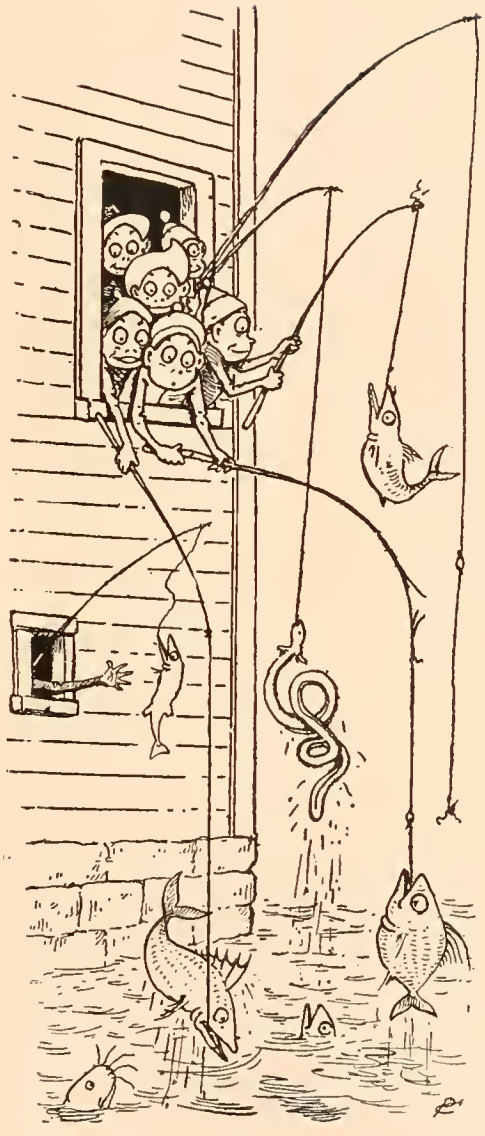
It takes good work to run a mill,
For hands may never long be still;



And eyes must note when oiling dries
Or hoppers clatter for supplies.
But with the Brownies at the task,
The mill itself no more could ask.
For every worker had his toil,
And every bearing had its oil,
While every belt was tight with strain,
And every hopper heaped with grain.
In such a place, with wheels at play,
'T was hard to tell where danger lay;

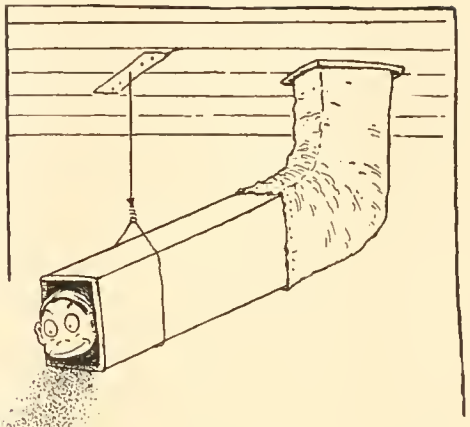


On shafts and belts, when off their guard,
A few went through some trials hard,
And, but that friends with
courage grand
And action prompt were
near at hand,
They might have needed
some repair
To bones as well as
outer wear.
A few who, in their secret way,
Had watched the miller,
day by day
In summer-time, when grists
were slow
And fish were running to
and fro,
Came from the mill to try
their fate,
With hook and line and
squirming bait
And quick to take the
miller's stand
They brought some handsome
fish to land
And little cared if trout
they took
Or pickerel dangled from the hook.
Said one: "A touch of sport you 'll find
Well rooted in a Brownie's mind,



A pleasure-seeking trait
that will
Assert itself through
trials still.
And that is well; why should
one toil
Nor lift his eyes above
the soil?



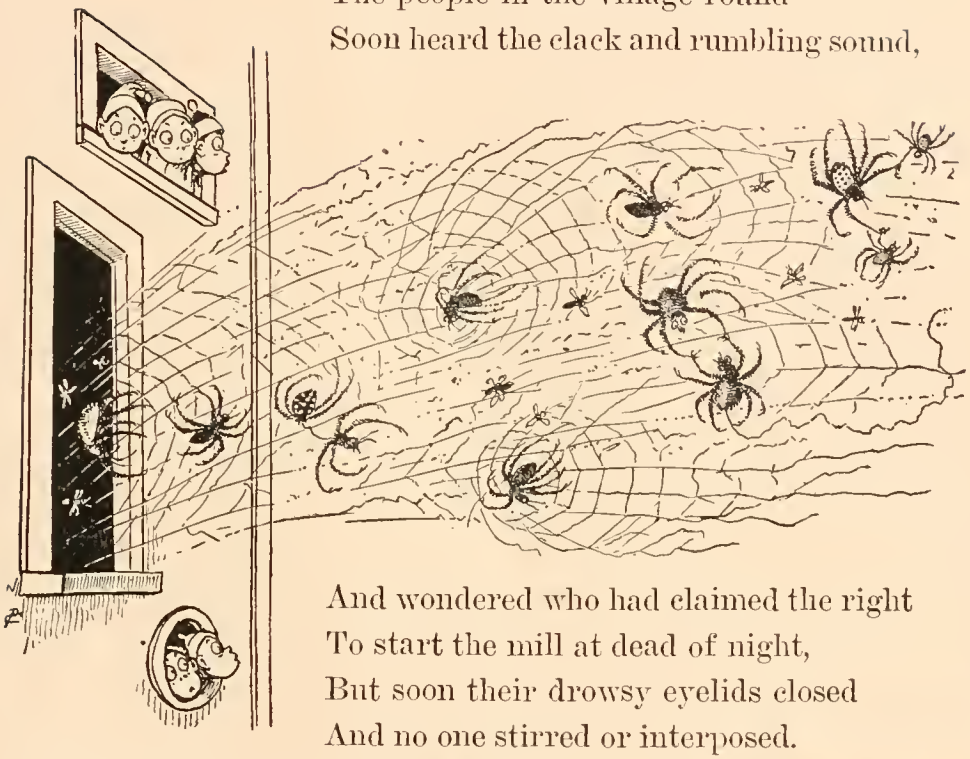


Where we both work
and sport unite
We play our Brownie's
part aright."
The wheels and mill stones
had no rest
Since first they started at their best,

The belts and pulleys
on the tear
Created such a gust
of air
The spiders that in
waiting hung
Were through the open
windows flung,
With scattered legs from
bodies sheared,
In groups and pairs
they disappeared,



And never after spun a snare
To catch a wandering insect there.
The people in the village round
Soon heard the clack and rumbling sound,



And wondered who had claimed the right
To start the mill at dead of night,
But soon their drowsy eyelids closed
And no one stirred or interposed.

A Brownie said: "At times we find
It hard on body and on mind
To carry through the tasks aright
That beckon us from pleasures bright;
But often people seem to need
A hint from elves by word or deed,
When fires burn low for want of wood
Or pantry-shelves lack something good,
When human hands are prone to rest,
Or lost the key of treasure chest."



Look where you will
you 'll find a few
Who with good deeds
are beating you.

The story goes, next morning found
A full supply of bushels ground;
And better still, nigh every door
In all the place, two bags or more



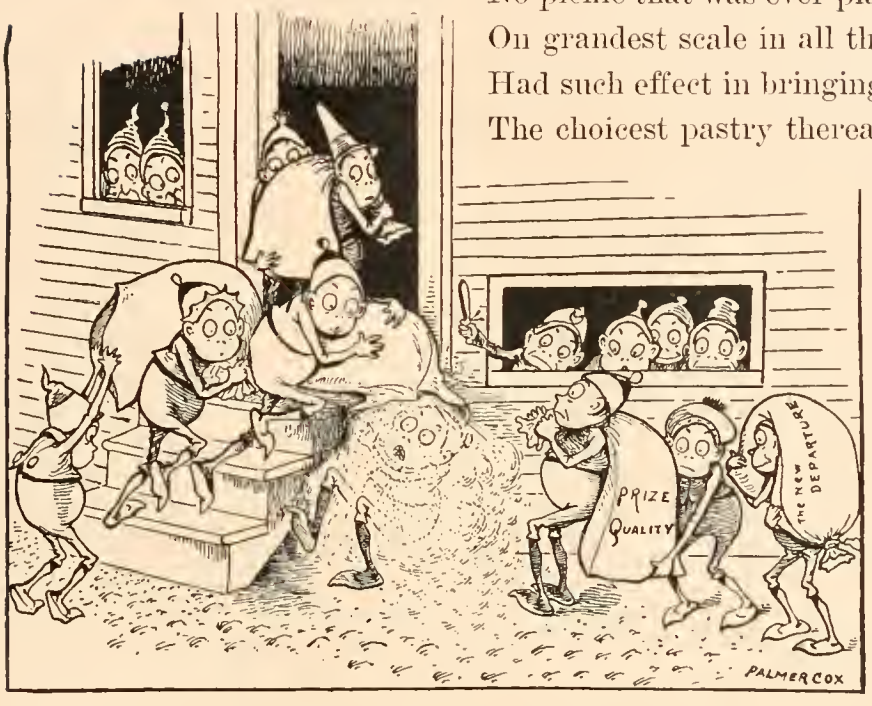
Of flour as fine as one could wish
Were standing ready for the dish;
And then such pudding, pie, and cake
They carried not a pain nor ache!



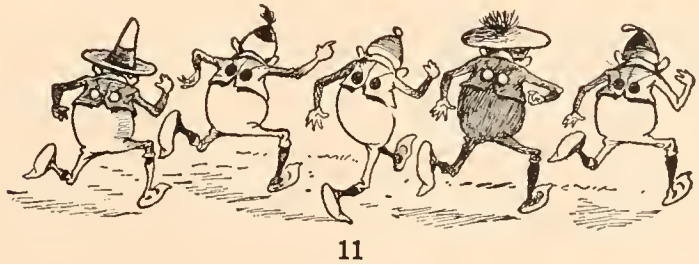
Then cookies rolled
without a stop,
Like buttons in
a tailor shop,
Upon the table, chair,
and floor,
And still the fingers
spread for more.
The children from the
blankets crawled,

The babies in their cradles bawled
To take a hand at mixing flour
The Brownies ground through mystic power.

No picnic that was ever planned
On grandest scale in all the land,
Had such effect in bringing out
The choicest pastry thereabout.



From house to house the greeting flew,
"Oh, are you at it? good for you!
I never knew until this hour
Just what it meant to have good flour!"





The hands that scarce had been in dough
Since Christmas time, a year ago,
Now caught the inspiration new
And all their force to kneading threw,
All white to shoulders was each dame
As from the flour bag she came
To add another batch of stuff
To what already seemed enough.
Men talked and tried to catch the drift
Of such a strange, unlooked-for gift,



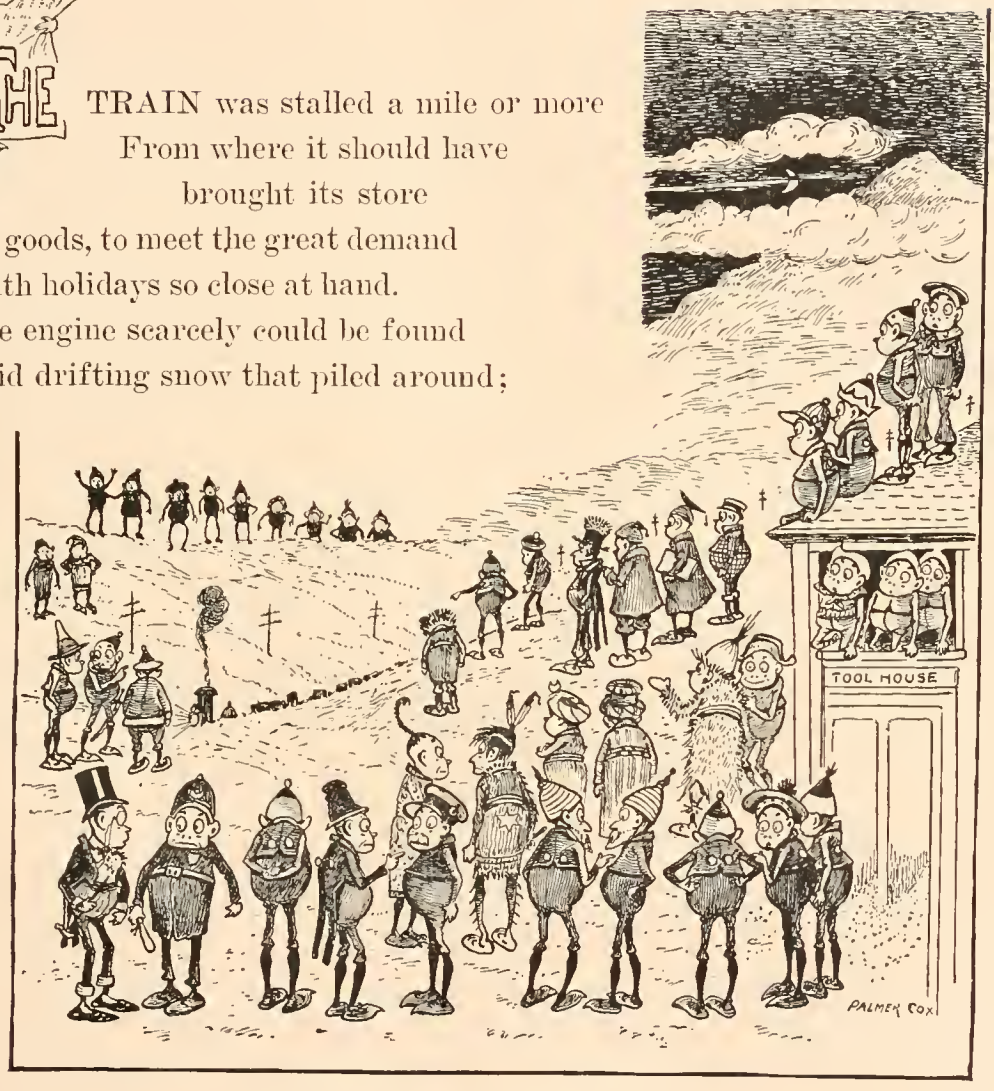
Some called to mind the rack-a-tack,
That through the night kept slumber back,
But never guessed the Brownie band
Had in the matter moved a hand.



THE BROWNIES AND THE STALLED TRAIN



TRAIN was stalled a mile or more
From where it should have
brought its store
Of goods, to meet the great demand
With holidays so close at hand.
The engine scarcely could be found
'Mid drifting snow that piled around;



The engineer had quit his lever
Until the men made some endeavor

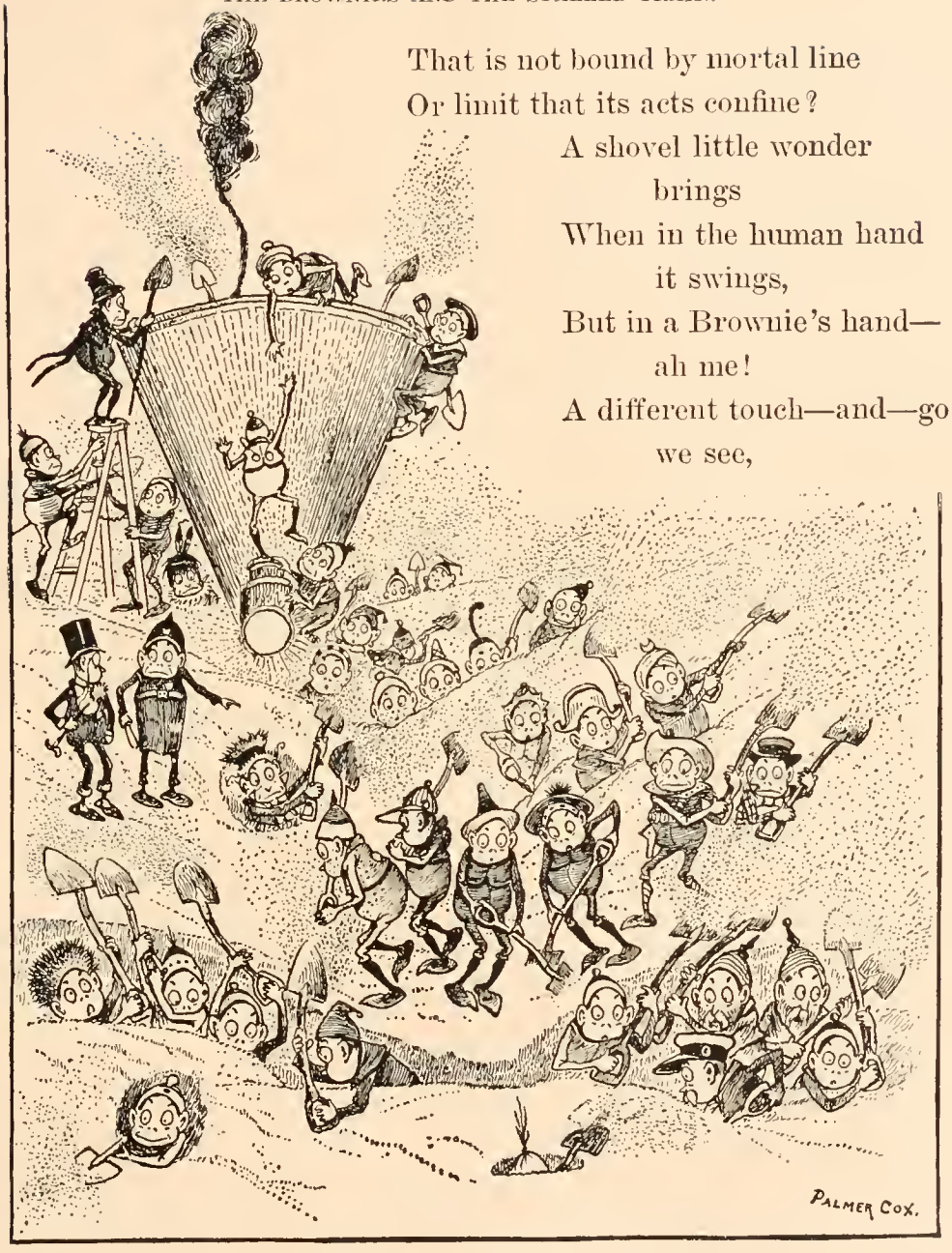
To give the iron horse a show
Upon the track beneath the snow.
By chance the Brownies reached the scene
At evening, as the moon serene
Was struggling through the snowy cloud
That wrapped the mountain like a shroud.
Said one, "We 'll lay aside our play,
And turn to work without delay,



For here 's a case will try our powers
And all the skill we count as ours.
The minutes let us now improve.
This engine with its train must move,
Or, failing this, express and freight
And baggage must no longer wait,
Though every Brownie, on his back,
Shall carry to the town a pack."
Some tried to dig the engine out
From drifts that lay in heaps about,
Though small the promise that the scheme
Would end in furnace-fire or steam.
But who can gage or understand
The power of a mystic hand



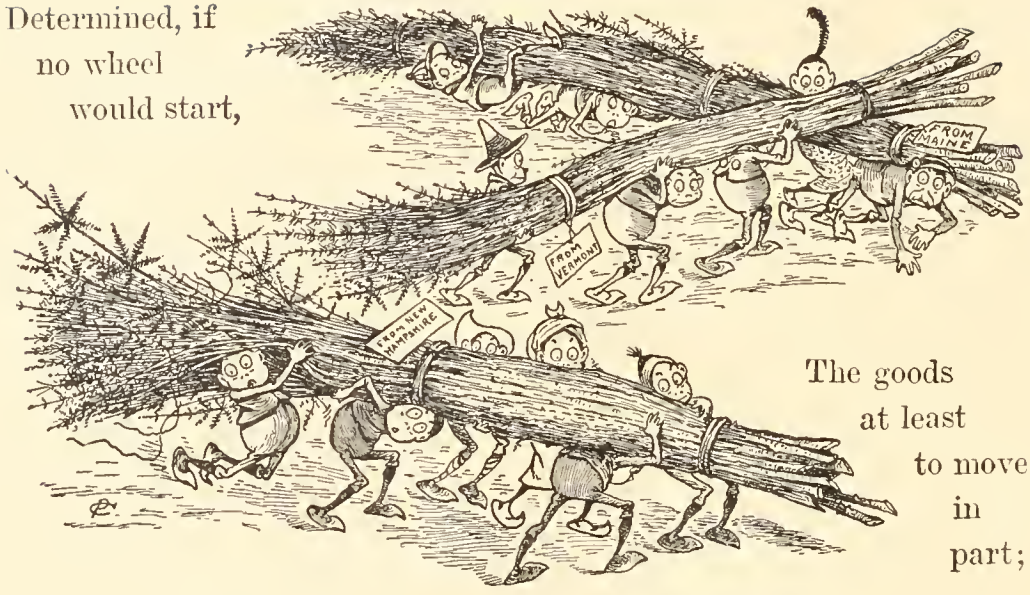
Don't be afraid, however grand,
To do the task with your own hand.



That is not bound by mortal line
Or limit that its acts confine?
A shovel little wonder brings
When in the human hand it swings,
But in a Brownie's hand—ah me!
A different touch—and—go we see,

And snow-plows, rotary or straight,
Surpass it only in their weight.

But all were not with drifts content,
For some to freight and baggage bent,
Determined, if no wheel would start,



The goods at least to move in part;

They gathered from the cars with speed
What every town is apt to need,
Especially that time of year
When feasts and presents should appear,—
Supplies to fill the pantry shelf,
And toys to make one hug himself,
The pussy-cat, the horse and cart,
The jumping-jack, that makes one start,



The evergreens in bundles all
Tied up with care for home and hall,
Some towering high, some small in size,
But all to give a glad surprise,
And bring the clap of childish hand,
And wonder at the scene so grand;



The pig, presented as a gift,
To give some farmer friend a lift,
And proving, by his plaintiff squeals,
'T was rather long between his meals.



"'T is strange," said one, "what things you find
In cars filled by the human kind;

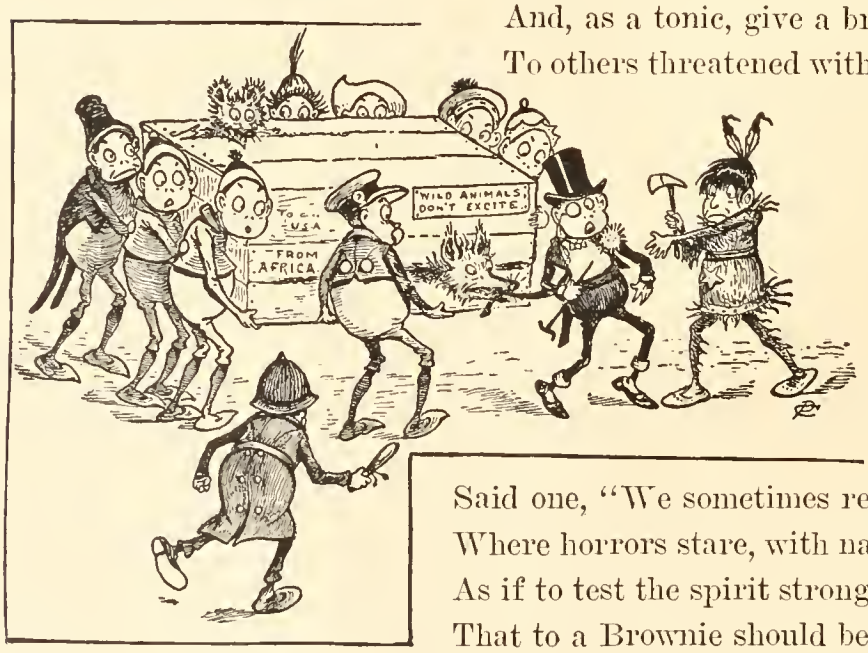
Potatoes from Bermuda brought,
And fish around Newfoundland caught,
The broken tackle showing plain
Their elders' lessons were in vain."



The broth may be all one could wish
But careless souls upset the dish.

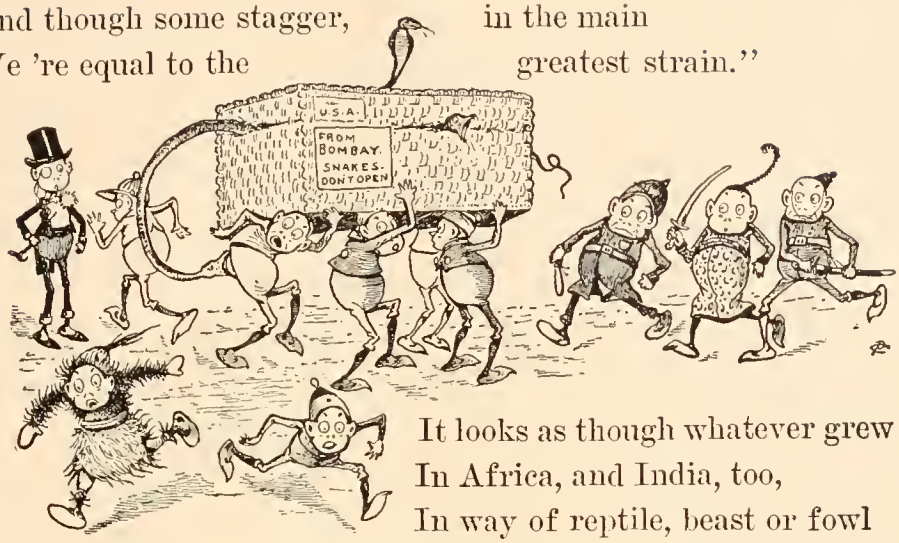


Some things came loose
when boxes tipped
That for menageries
were shipped,
And, for a moment,
it seemed plain
That panic would a foothold gain;
And it took courage of the best
To shove things back into the nest.
For some have daring that will rise
Superior to the shock that tries,
And, as a tonic, give a brace
To others threatened with disgrace.



Said one, "We sometimes reach a scene
Where horrors stare, with naught between,
As if to test the spirit strong
That to a Brownie should belong;

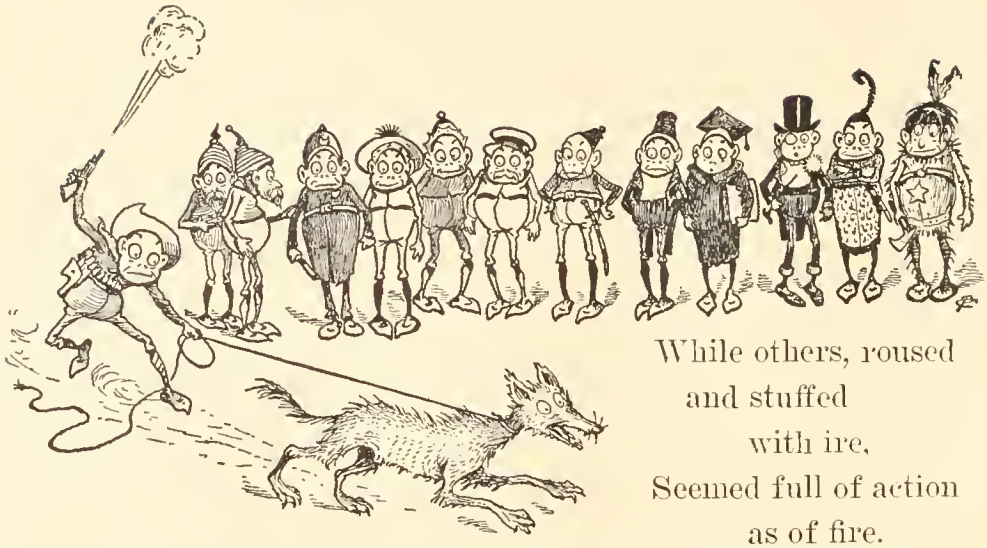
And though some stagger, in the main
We 're equal to the greatest strain."



It looks as though whatever grew
In Africa, and India, too,
In way of reptile, beast or fowl
Was there to hiss and scream, and howl,
Brought from a tropic clime, a few
Were to the zero weather new,



To nothing say of freaks at hand
That prosper in our native land.
And, sluggish from the wintry air,
Made little stir or trouble there,



While others, roused
and stuffed
with ire,
Seemed full of action
as of fire.

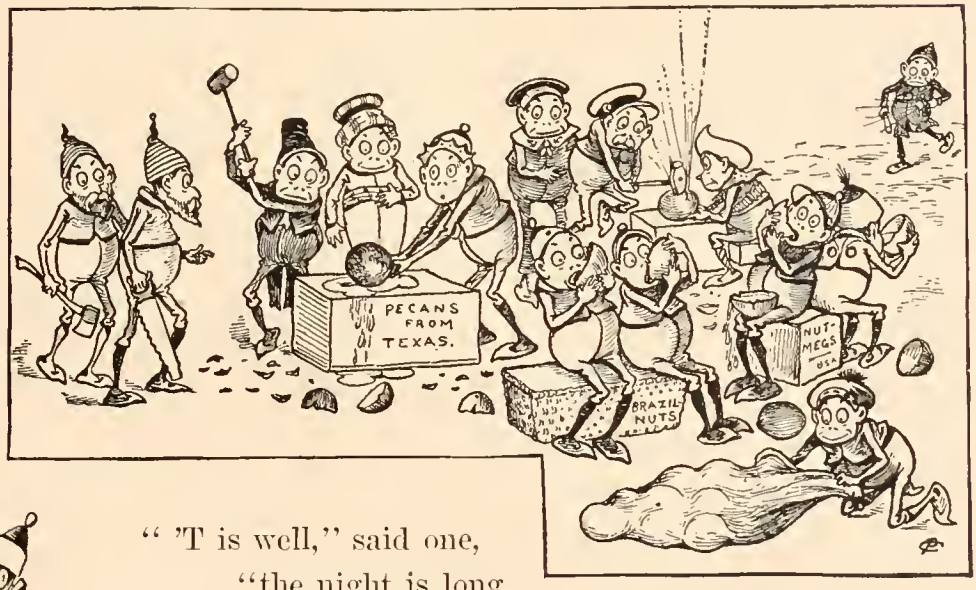
Fine fruit was there brought many miles
In vessels from far distant isles,
And it went hard, in all their haste,
To pass it on without a taste,



Though ere the task was done, in truth,
Or things beyond the reach of tooth,



Some had a better knowledge won
Of fruit that felt the tropic sun.





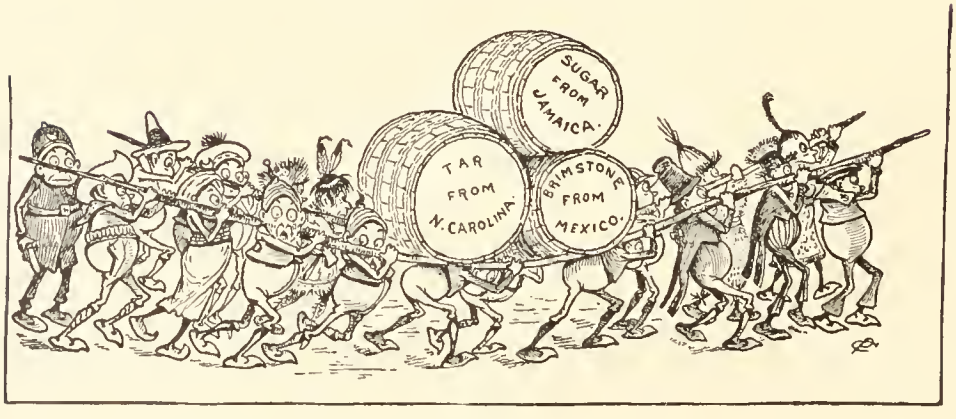
If labor with delight
proceeds
Then little sympathy
one needs.

"'T is well," said one,
"the night is long
Till sounds the cheerful
breakfast gong,
For Brownie hands have
much to do
Before our heavy job is through.
The work, as old traditions tell,
That we begin, we finish well;

The time seems fitted to the task,
And nothing more could Brownies ask."



So box and bundle, crate and can,
Were moved according to their plan,



While in the drifts the engine stood
And would not move for bad or good,
No bell in front, no "toot" behind,
Gave warning of a change of mind.



But at their task
the Brownies
kept,
And moved
the goods
while
people
slept,



Till in the station, safely piled,
With creatures of the wood and wild,



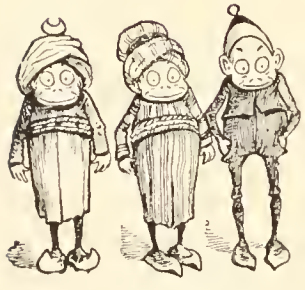
The merchandise of every name
Was ready for the owners' claim.





THE BROWNIES MEND THE DAM

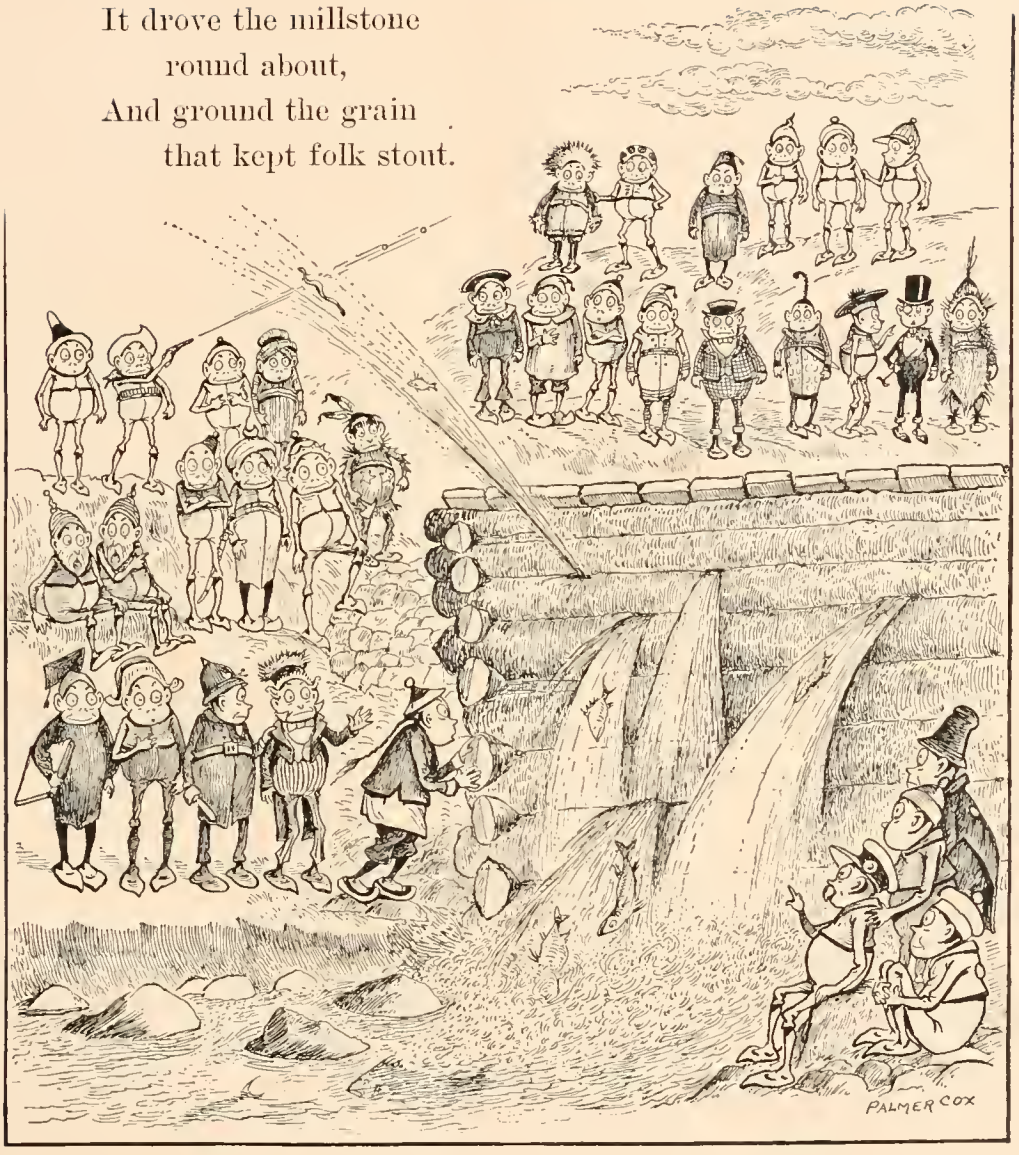
AS Brownies talked in spirits good,
Beside a broken dam they stood,
To watch the water as it flew
From many holes the timbers through.
Said one: "The noise that strikes the ear
Would tell that something 's lacking here,
If one had not an eye to see
The water spouting out so free;
It surely finds no lack of room
To make escape without the flume,
Where it 's supposed
to lie and wait
With patience till they
raise the gate."
Another said: "This
dam supplied
The needs of all the
country wide;



'T is not enough to
laws obey,
You must do more, or
lose your way.



It drove the millstone
round about,
And ground the grain
that kept folk stout.

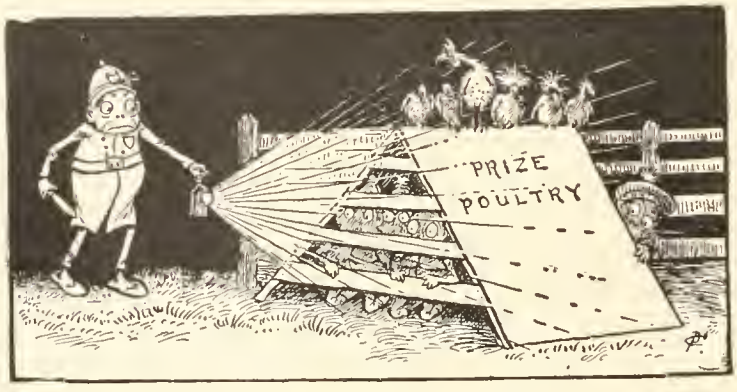


From Grandsire, with his gruel bowl,
To Baby, learning how to roll.
It made the saw play up and down,
And furnish lumber for the town

To build its homes so
snug and warm,
And give protection
from the storm."
A third exclaimed:
"Now here 's
a task
That will have all
that one
could ask,



Who seeks distinction to attain,
In way of struggle and of strain!
And I, for one, don't want to miss
Or put aside a chance like this.
We all can see there 's danger here,
For even us, who never fear;
And, if a river talks at all,
Quite plainly says this waterfall,
'Begin, begin, to stop the leaks,
You 'll need no other bath for weeks.'



But where the
human kind
would dread
To make a move,
we push ahead,
And in this way
the honor win
That only comes
from wading in.

If men with chisel, saw,
and bore,
Could patch this break,
we can do more,



Because their skill is ours, too,
Besides some gifts they never knew."
What need we, with our knowledge great
Of Brownie band, do more than state
The task was soon commenced with zest,
And every member did his best.

The work begun was work indeed,
Of all their strength they felt the need,
Of skill to plan, and power to stick
Or make a leap both sure
and quick,



For water, if there be enough
And running fast, is dangerous stuff,
And those who went above the flow
Were not more safe than those below.

'T was hard above to check the rush,
And hard below to meet the gush;
And some were troubled by the fish
That at the moment had a wish

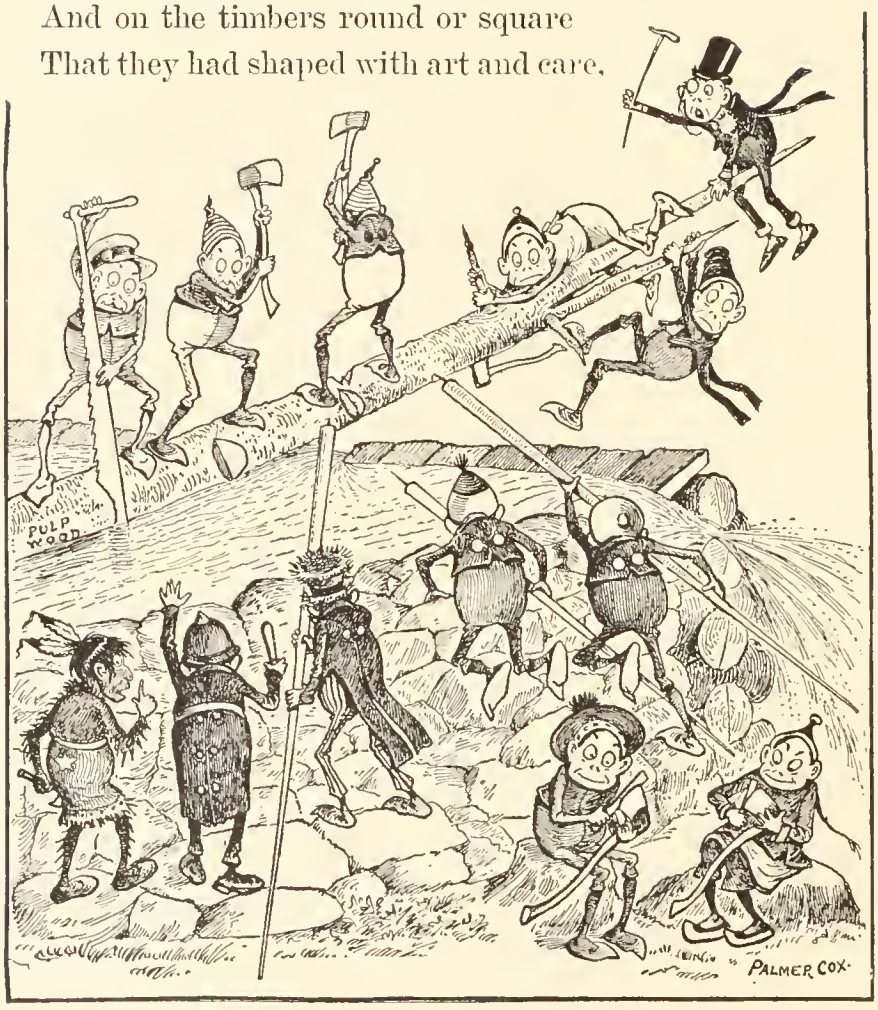


To take advantage of the flow
To reach the ocean miles below;
If pleasure had been their intent,
Instead of patching up a rent,
They would have found the fishing fine
Without the aid of hook or line.
The logs, that down the stream they ran
To aid in working out their plan,
Were seldom checked at boom or bar
And, to their sorrow, went too far,
While Brownies with the sticks were tossed,
And for a time were counted lost,
For logs rolled over as they ran,
And changed at once the Brownies' plan,
By keeping heads a foot below
Where it was thought the feet would go.



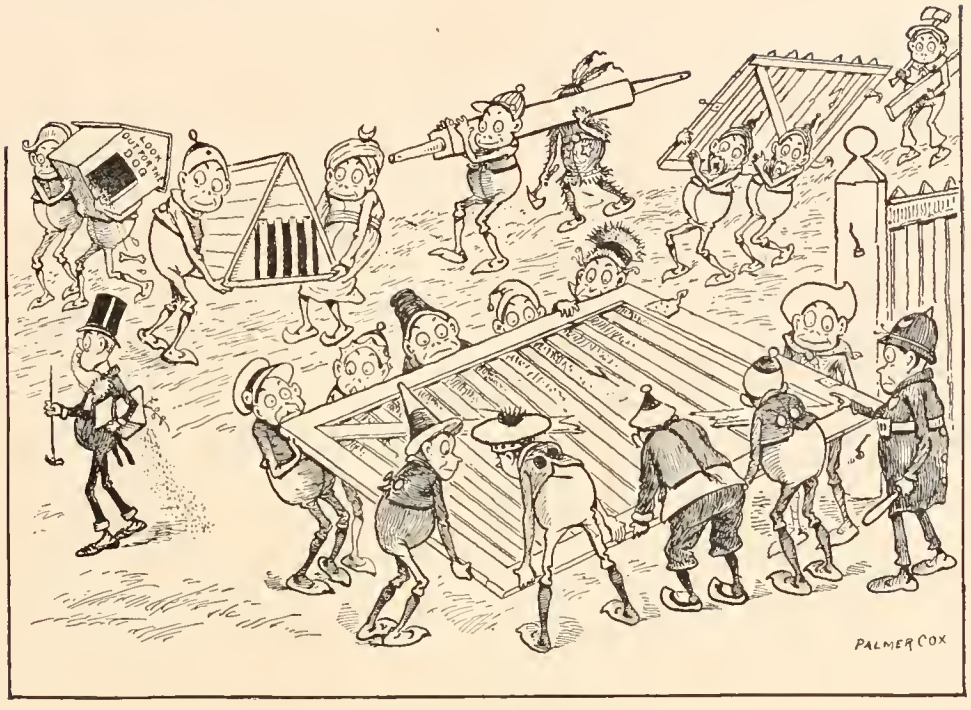
What's art or skill
unless employed
In some good way,
where work's en-
joyed?

Some might have laughed who saw the sight,
But there 's no fun in such a plight.
Some bravely faced the danger great,
While more went backward to their fate,
And on the timbers round or square
That they had shaped with art and care,



There was no moment, do their best,
When one could let his prudence rest.

'T would have been painful to behold
If one knew not traditions old,



That Brownie people can win through
The trials that would us undo.
There is no mourning at the home
When they lose breath beneath the foam,
Or grieving at the fireplace,
If they are missing for a space.
They 're up and active as a clock
Nor ever suffer from the shock,
Or they would not for years have run
From page to page as they have done.
A mortal scarce can comprehend
The energy they all expend



To carry out their plans entire,
That failure may not mock desire.
Like bees in hive, or ants in hill,
They show a common stir and will,
And though at times they crowded seem,
They 're only working out their scheme,
Each calculation made aright
To reach success and honor bright;
If one should judge them ere they 're through,
While all 's confusion and to do,
You 'd think success would never crown
Such crazy acts, or bring renown.
At such a time advice is lost,
As all have plans and won't be bossed,
But carry out as firm
as stone
The part each thinks
to be his own.
Strange things were into
service press'd
That in their hurry
promised best,



And few the objects that escaped
Their eyes, if they were rightly shaped,
Or could with labor small be made
To stop a leak if rightly laid.
They used some gates that long had swung
A welcome wide to old and young,
But now were sagging in their place
With faithless hinge and broken brace.

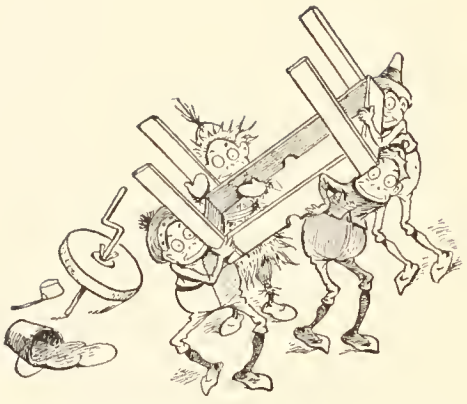
The wooden troughs from pigs they drew
Before their evening meal was through,



And bore them off to stop a leak
Ere morning showed a crimson streak,
While disapproval, loud and shrill,
Came from the swine that lost their swill.



Escaping thus from pen and bars
They followed, squealing to the stars,
For pigs, however ill they feel
Are never known to miss a meal.
No doubt it gave the Brownies pain,
To hear the creatures squeal in vain,
For still they harbor feelings fine,
With due regard for even swine,



But their demand for wood was great,
And little timber blessed the State,
The band, besides, had not the power
To fell the trees; within that hour
And so, in spite of all the din,
The piggy's patent trough went in.
The task was hard, and tried the best,
And all were anxious for a rest,
But that was not the place to stay
And face the coming glare of day.

The work might show, as show it did
Ere hand could move or tongue forbid,
While men were dreaming of their spoil
The active sprites pursued their toil,
And caused surprise extending wide
Around the country every side,
The people gathered, as they will,
When rumors every section fill,
Each farmer something seemed to spy
That looked familiar to his eye,
But how it got beneath the flood,
Supporting stones or stopping mud

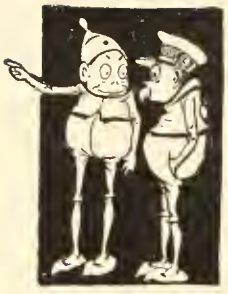


Was more than men could well make out
However long they stayed about.
But grain was sowed, and corn was hoed,
And harvest in the barn was stowed,
And still the story of the way
That dam was patched, 'tween day and day,
Could neither satisfy nor tire
The listener by the gate or fire.



So those who still had strength to spare
To weaker comrades gave their care,
For some were heated, some were chilled,
And some with aches and pains were filled,

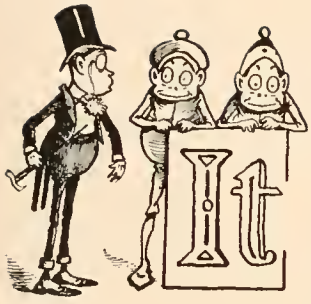
While more had bruises, or were sore
With work they never tried before;
The Brownies, when they aid a friend,
No commonplace assistance lend.
To share one's burden and his grief
Is counted comfort and relief,
But when the Brownies have a chance
They make a more humane advance,
And in their zeal to serve an elf
Take up his trouble and himself.
They all were glad to bring a close
To work, before the people rose,
They hastened to a safe retreat
Where no surprises they would meet,
However bright the day might be,
Or mortals hope to find the key.



If you are faithful at your task,
Time will grant you what you ask.



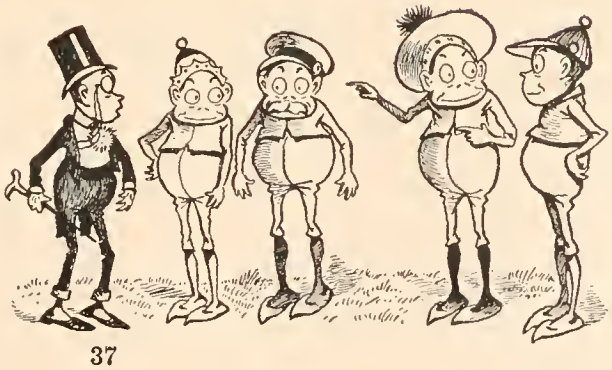




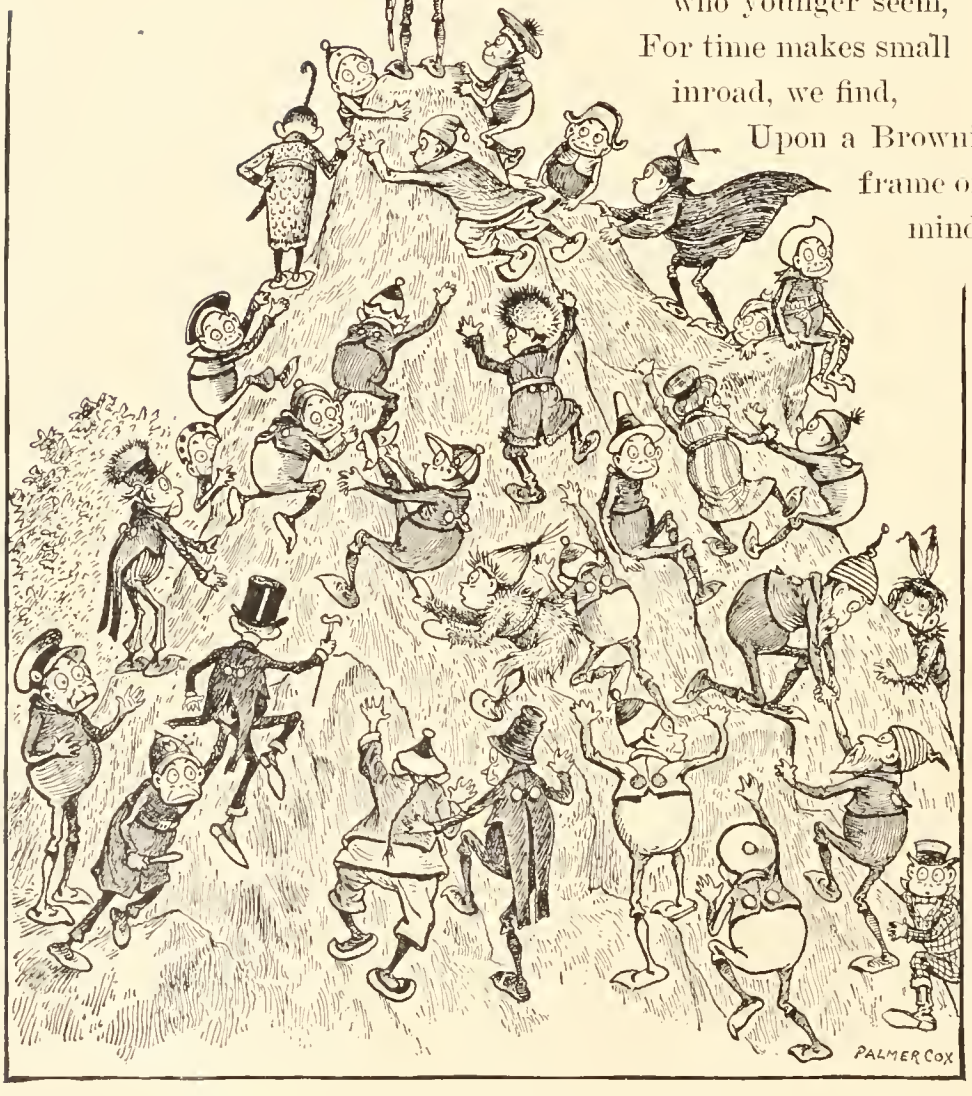
THE BROWNIES AT HAYMAKING

IT WAS a season wet that tried
The farmers' patience far and wide,
The hay was fine but rain too free
Fell from each cloud that left the sea,
Till people sat inside the door
And watched their meadows flooding o'er,
When Brownies, passing through at dark,
The sad condition paused to mark.

Within the margin
of a wood,
That crowned a peak,
the Brownies stood.
The old without a pant
or puff
Climbed up the hill
though steep
and rough.



They do their part
in every scheme
As well as those
who younger seem,
For time makes small
inroad, we find,
Upon a Brownie's
frame or
mind,



Though mortals may grow old and lame,
The Brownies will remain the same.



The dullest cloud
that 's o'er us
whirled
May have a fire could
light the world.

Said one: "To-day was fairly bright,
The sun got in its touch all right,
And hay that 's lying round us now
Would look far better in the mow;
Especially this piece, I 'm sure,
Owned by a farmer old and poor.
If this is lost to him, good-by
To half his winter months' supply!
There will be bellowing in the stall
When hunger waits the farmer's call,
If rick and manger lack the hay
The beasts have waited for all day.
Now who is ready to begin
To help and put this fodder in?"

Another said, "Not here alone
You 'll work where goodness
should be shown,
For everyone can see
with you
Where duty lies, and
what 's to do."
The midnight pleasures
they had planned,
Before they reached
this piece of land,



Were for the time put out of mind
And head and hand to work inclined.
Some knew how forks felt in the hands,
Had handled rakes in other lands,



Some could in bundles
roll the hay,
Until great forkfuls
waiting lay,
While more could pitch
to any height
And others build
the load aright.
On carts they did not
all depend,
But everything that
help could lend

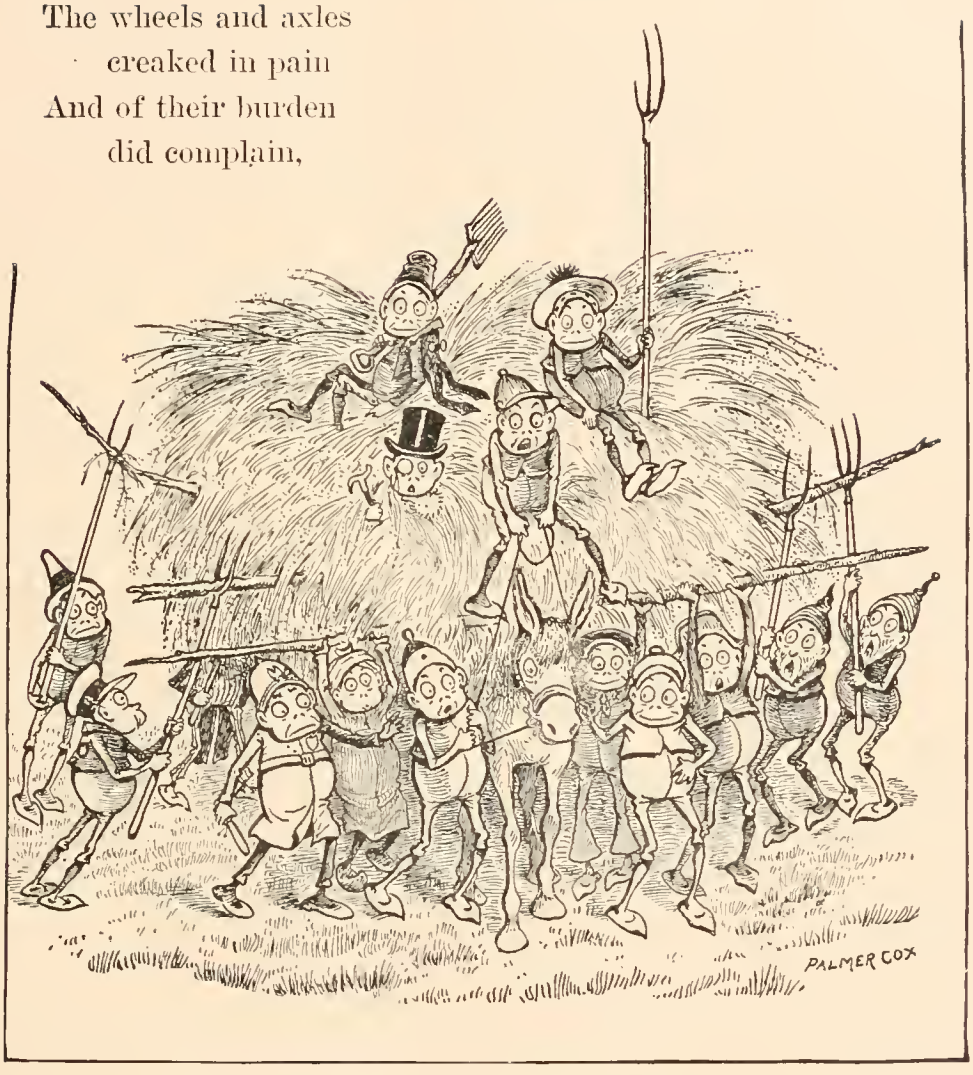


Was pressed that night to do its share,
Till many stalls were empty there.
A supernatural gift can bring
Muscles to break the strongest thing,
And snapping ash or maple round
Was on the field a common
sound.
But what 's
a broken tine
or tooth,
Or even
splintered
head forsooth,
When some black
cloud is swinging near

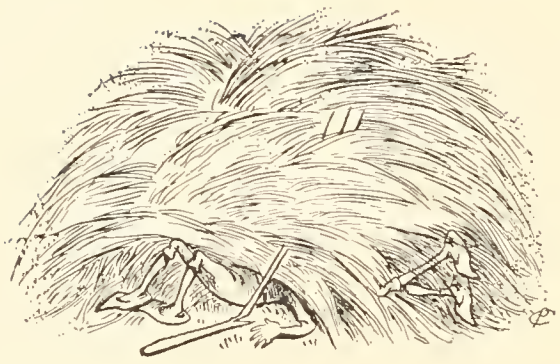


Intent on drenching every spear?
Some forks gave out beneath the weight
And rakes were brought to ruin's gate.

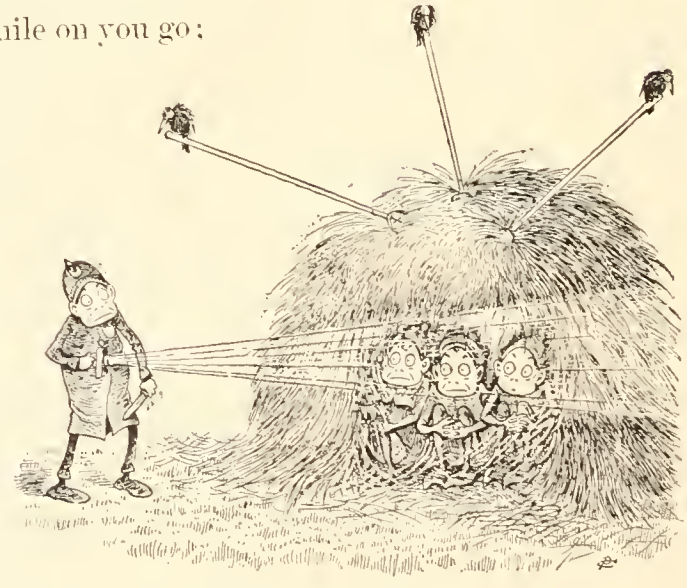
The wheels and axles
creaked in pain
And of their burden
did complain,



Till some old spokes thought it was just
And proper to betray their trust,
And it took coaxing on the part
Of Brownies to keep up their heart.
A little sprinkle threatening more,
The workers feared a great downpour,



And ne'er was hay put out
of sight
In barns so quickly as
that night,—
Pile after pile, load
after load,
Was carted down the
muddy road.
One Brownie said, "My
load was built
In proper shape, but got a tilt
Which changed the nature and the plan
When o'er that pile of stones we ran.
'T is hard enough to build, you know,
On level ground, while on you go;
But harder still for
man or sprite
When climbing over
all in sight."
Some ran through
puddles in
the road
Where wheels were
hid beneath
the load,
Sunk deep in mud
and sticky clay



But safe and dry they kept the hay.
Said one, "We can't save all the crop
In the short time we have to stop,

Or that the beasts, ere winter 's by,
Will wish had reached the manger dry.





But that to which our efforts bend
Will count for something in the end.
A little here, a little there,
Is better than a hay-mow bare."
If farmers could such servants find
To keep their interests in mind,
And work till tired enough to drop,
To save from harm a threatened crop,

With one consent and one desire,
From business they could soon retire.
To try and keep the hay in place
Around the load some had to race,
And with the forks and rakes applied
Kept careful guard on every side;



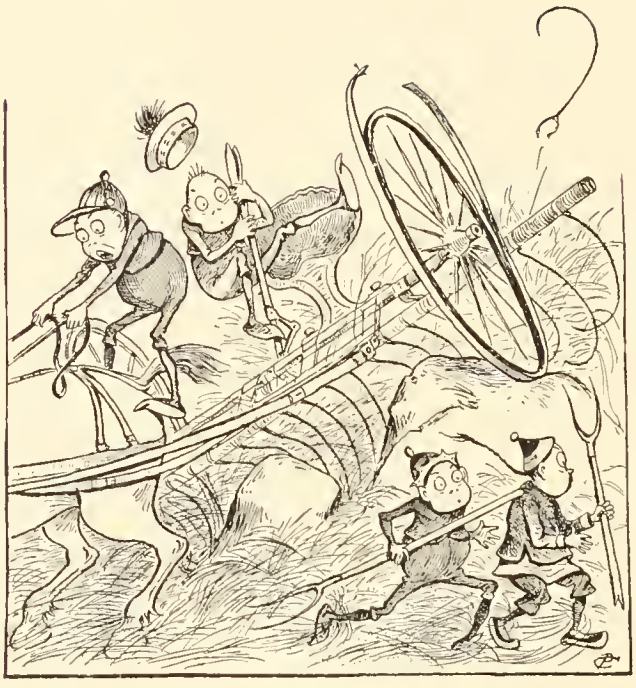
While more, to keep it packed and press'd,
Upon the load found place to rest,
And while performing service good
Enjoyed the ride as well they could.
But had there been more stakes to which
They could have clung when came a pitch,



There might have
been more
time for
play
And less alarm
along the
way.
Some blocked the
doors with
loads below
That took up
time to
safely stow,
But openings in
the roof
they made
So that the work
was not
delayed.
And at the top
or on the
floor
Each hand its share
of labor bore.
The barns were
filled ere rise of sun,
When morning broke
the task was done.

With ardor that brooked no restraint,
And harmony, would please a saint,

They raked the fields, and
cleaned the road,
And horses first a
weakness showed.
It took a pressure
all around
To shut the doors as
they were found.
The boards were sprung,
and nails were vain
To close the openings
made by strain.
It took some work to
run and race
And put things back
in proper place;



If they had time repairs to do,
They would have left things good as new,
But in the sky the broadening light
Was waiting not for man or sprite,



So Brownies with
a conscience clean
Made haste to leave
the rural scene.
And when the sun with
rays of gold
Proved all was true
the dawn had told,
Where were the Brownies?
Nowhere near.





When tasks are done they disappear.
The flooded plain or mountain land
Is not a barrier to the band.

They disappear, and those who know
The most about them cannot show
Their hiding place, or where they rest,
But wait their coming, which is best.

.

The wondering farmer never knew
Who bundled up his hay, and drew
So well across the sods and stones
The loads that shook the Brownies' bones,
For elf-bands leave no mark behind
To satisfy the curious mind.



The work well done
speaks for itself,
It fills the bin, and
crowds the shelf.

But sweating beasts that did their share
Knew well no common folk were there,
And will in mind review that night
When months and years have taken flight.
If they could talk, or thoughts exchange,
As round the field they graze or range,
They 'd tell of things that they have seen,
And many a marvel that has been.

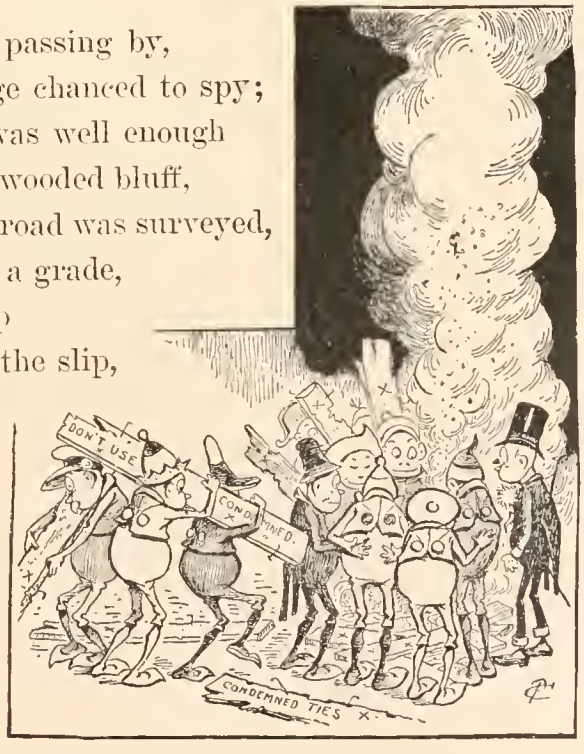




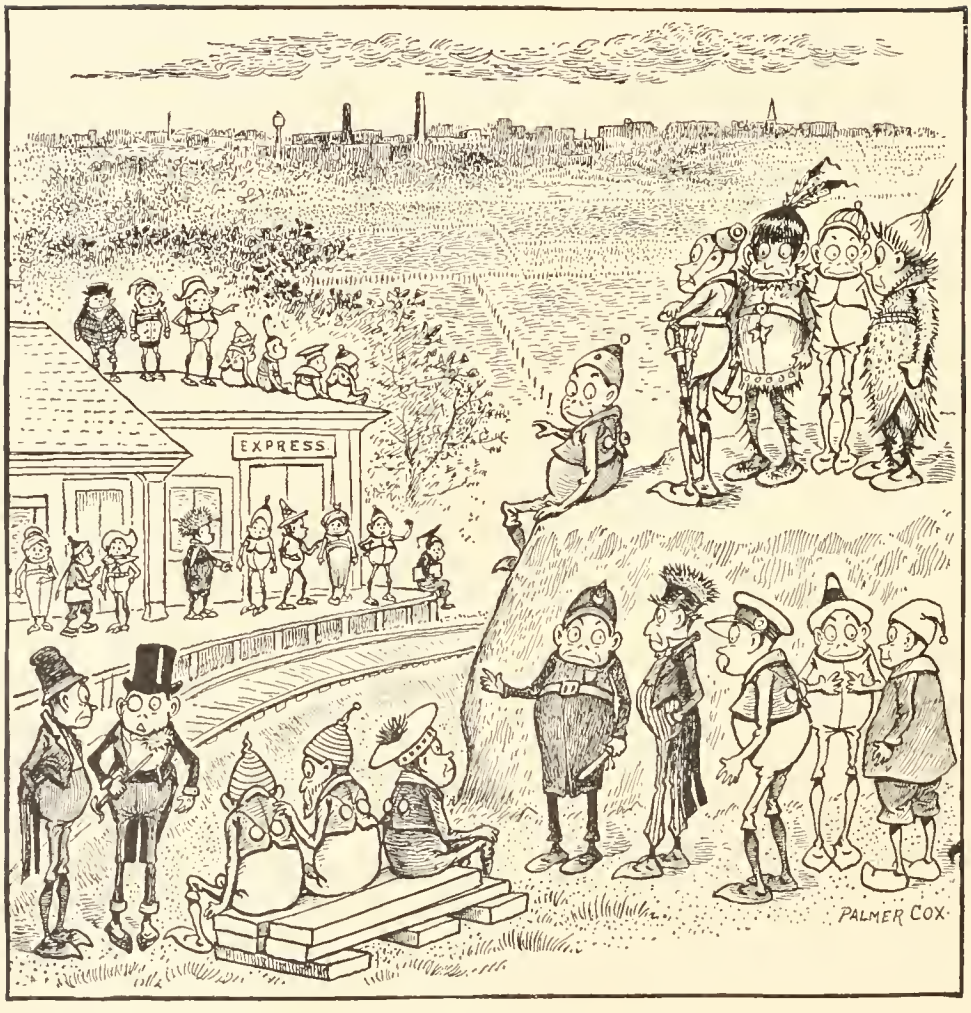
THE BROWNIES AND THE RAILROAD



AT dusk as they were passing by,
The band a village chanced to spy;
The town itself was well enough
And nestled by a wooded bluff,
But when the railroad was surveyed,
In order to avoid a grade,
And thus insure a speedy trip
They almost gave the place the slip,
Thinking 't would make
their business pay
To place the track some
miles away.
Said one, as he glanced
o'er the space
Between the station and
the place,

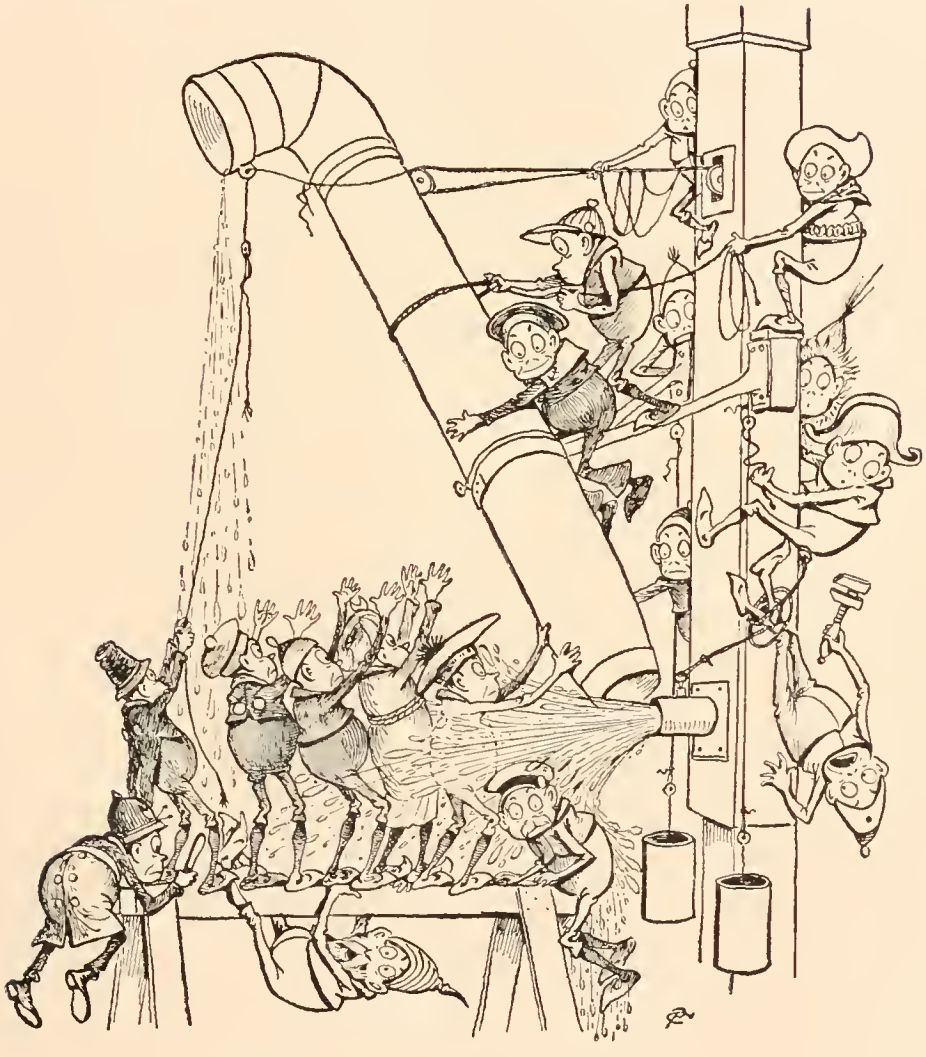


"We 're here to aid the human kind,
To note the want, to ease the mind,
The more we serve, believe me still,
The better we our mission fill."



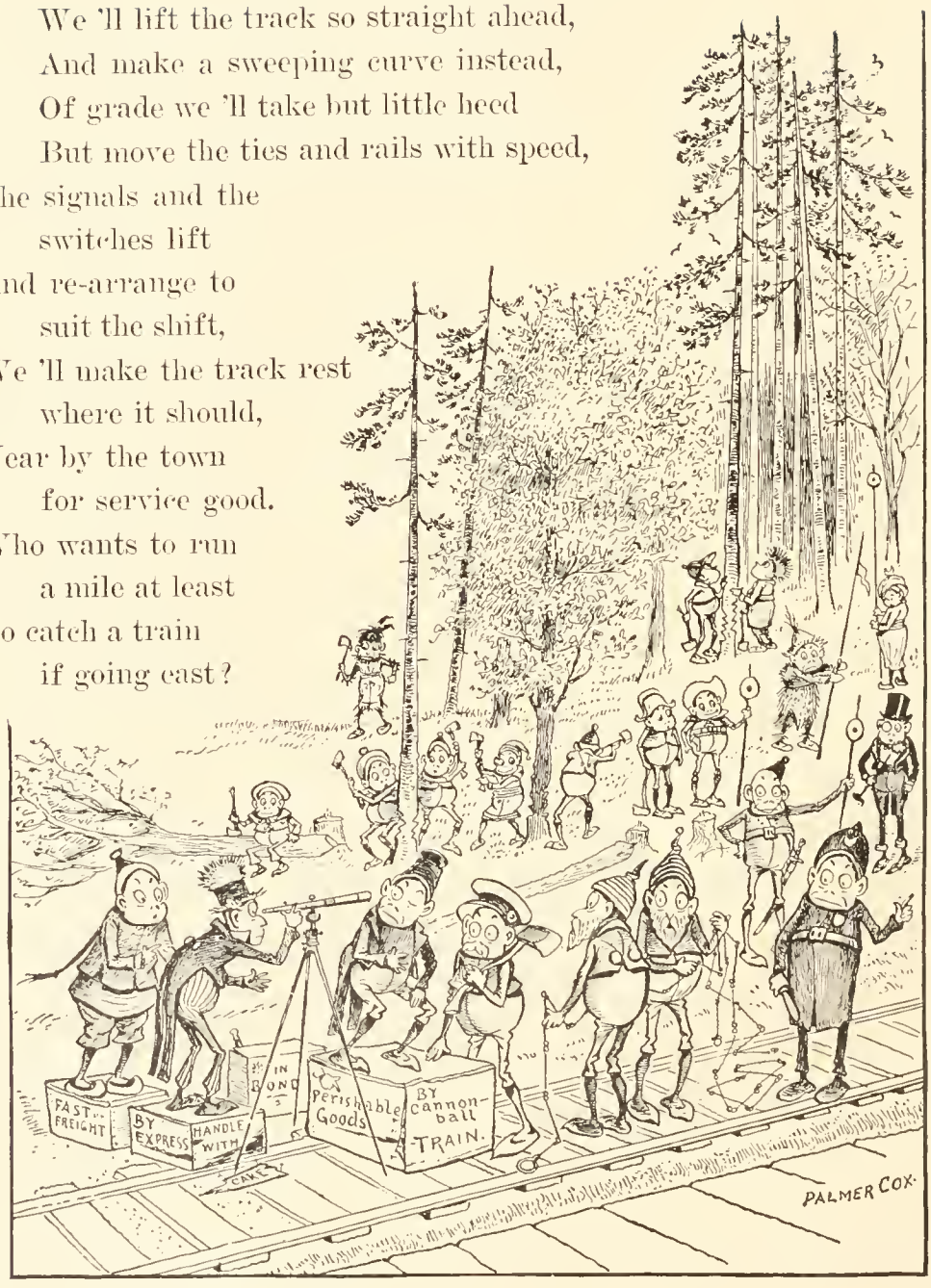
Another said, "Right well I know
What 's in your mind. We 'll not be slow

To act upon the hint so bright
And move the railroad track to-night.
I know their business through and through—
There 's not a train till morning due,

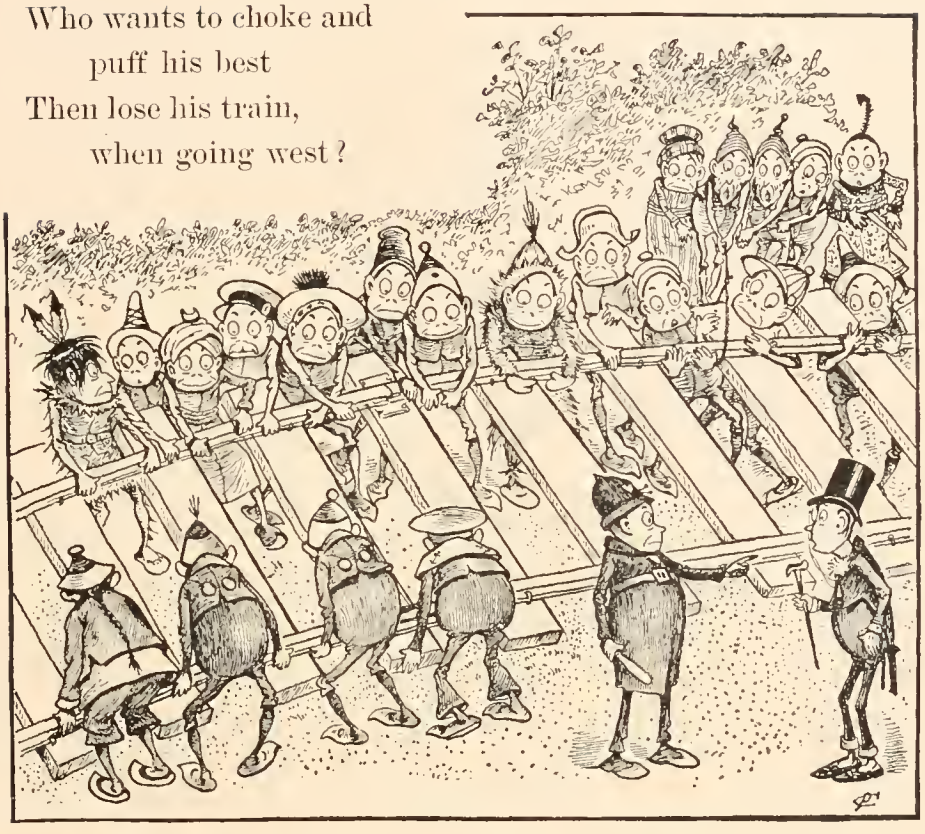


Our mystic power will help us out,
We 'll change the whole concern about,

We 'll lift the track so straight ahead,
And make a sweeping curve instead,
Of grade we 'll take but little heed
But move the ties and rails with speed,
The signals and the
switches lift
And re-arrange to
suit the shift,
We 'll make the track rest
where it should,
Near by the town
for service good.
Who wants to run
a mile at least
To catch a train
if going east?



Who wants to choke and
puff his best
Then lose his train,
when going west?

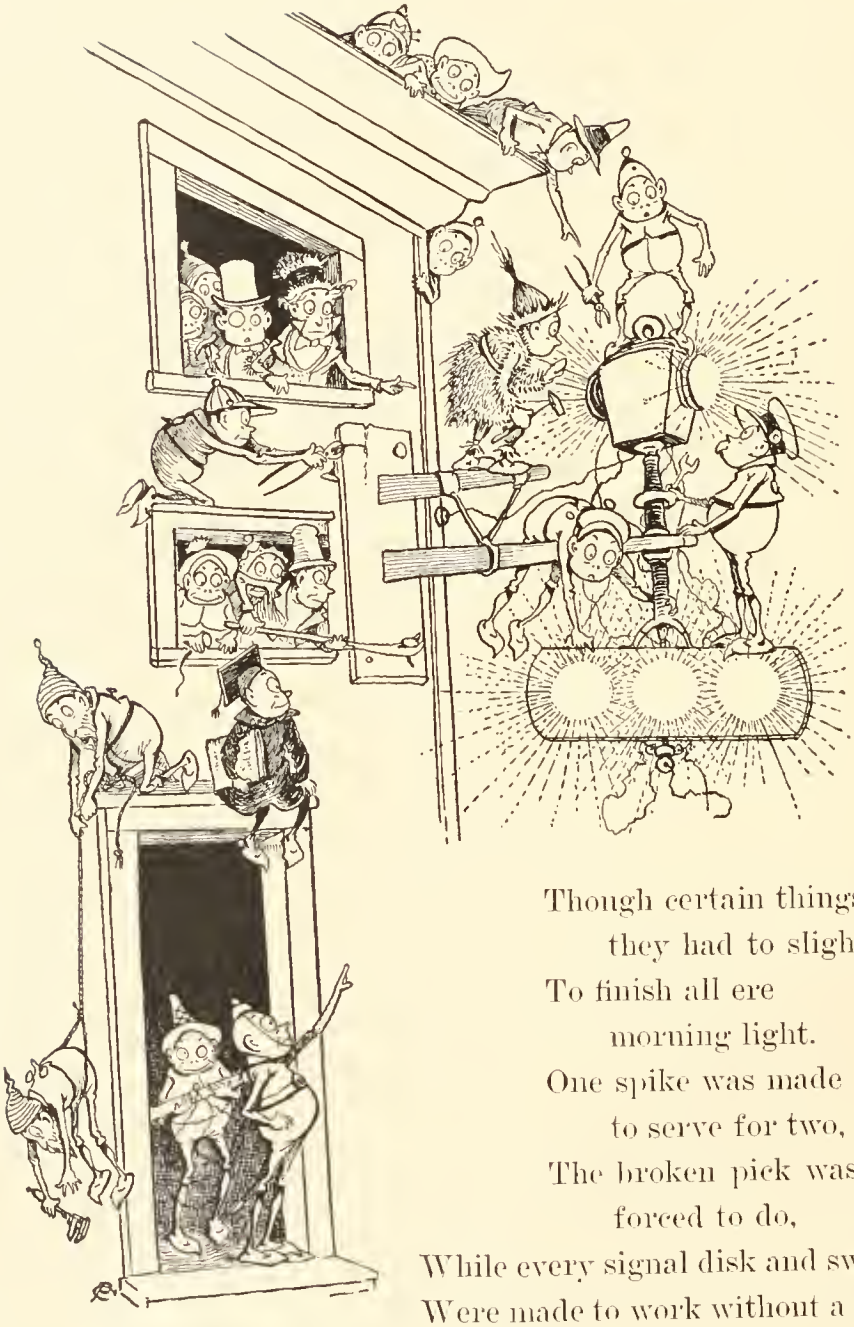




A failure may, as
some contend,
Turn out a blessing in
the end.

Before the sun looks o'er yon hill,
Where pine and spruce are growing still,
We 'll work a change, and make a move
That will to all a blessing prove."

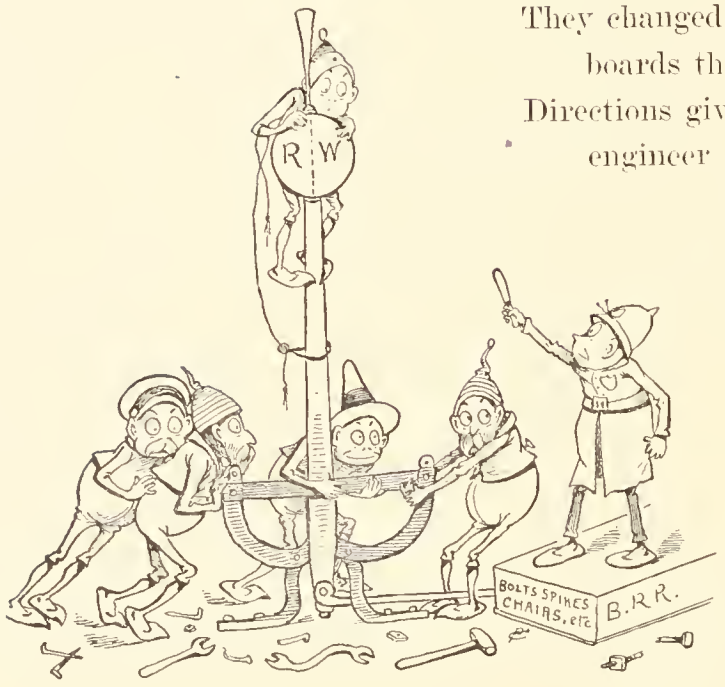
We 're not prepared with time, or strength,
To give each separate act at length.
Enough to say that shovels flew,
That picks were plied, that spikes they drew.
The rails were bent and newly laid
And some attention paid to grade,



Though certain things
they had to slight
To finish all ere
morning light.
One spike was made
to serve for two,
The broken pick was
forced to do,
While every signal disk and switch,
Were made to work without a hitch,

As they could hardly chances take
With such as these, for safety's sake.
Said one, "When war
is under way
Some tracks are laid
without delay,
When armies make
a hasty move,
Their chance of victory
to improve;
But, in the piping
time of peace,
Plain people's comfort
to increase,
Not often is track-
laying done
Between the set and
rise of sun."
They moved the railroad
crossing sign
And switch, to suit their
own design,
And that was far more
work than play,
For railroad men make
things to stay
And don't expect a change
to make
Unless their interest
is at stake.

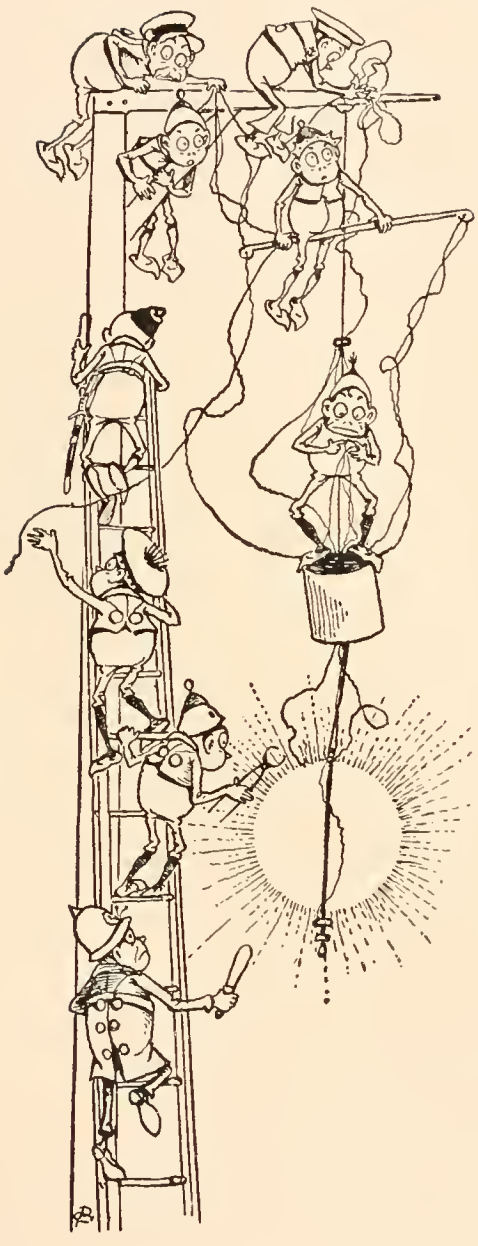




They changed the signal
boards that clear
Directions give the
engineer
Just where to
toot, slow up,
or bide,
Or where to pull
the throttle
wide.
To some the work
was strange
and new,
But all were
there to
buckle to,

And each was willing
to improve,
To lend a hand, to
shove or move.
A busy half hour's time
was spent
In moving wires that
danger meant,
For all with currents
strong were charged,
Which much the Brownies'
risk enlarged;





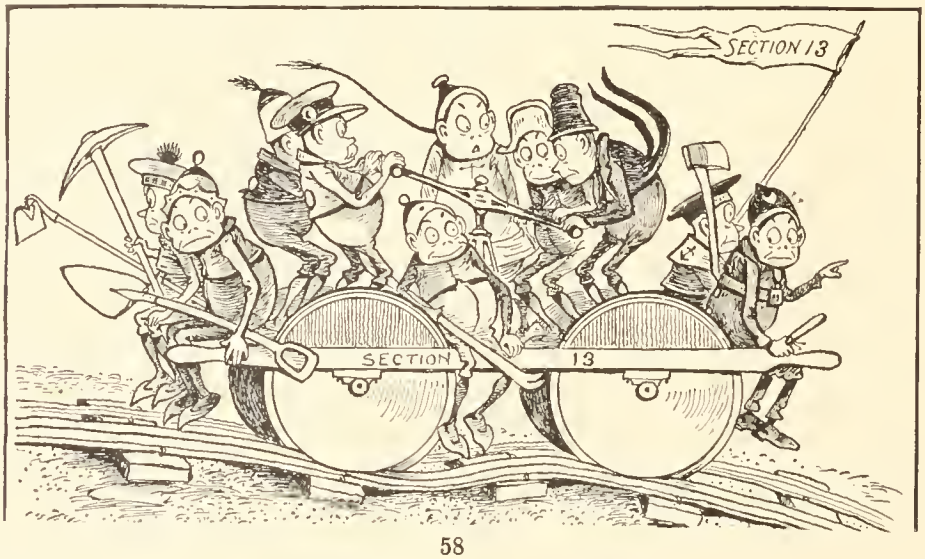
At times a tumble to
the ground
Would seem to bring
the stars around,
But it must be
a quick affair
That takes a Browme
unaware,
And though some plans
were broken through
No injury befell the
crew.
A person might forego
his sleep,
Without a sigh, to gain
a peep
At that most interesting
band
With such a job as this
on hand.
There 's much to do that
must be right,
There 's little that can
bear a slight,
But with the Brownies
at the task
No other guarantee
we ask.

'T was fortunate no iron span
Or wooden bridge was in the plan;

A culvert, and a pipe
or two
To let the water ripple
through,
Was all they found to
cause delay
Except a bed of sand
and clay.



And as the stars
made their
escape,
The curve took
on a better
shape,
A hand-car was
in service brought
On which a number passage sought,



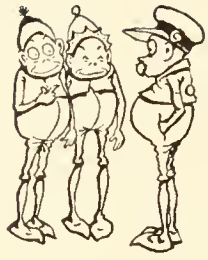
As back and forth along the line
They carried on their bold design.
And by the time the dawn began
To crowd itself on drowsy man,
And early birds commenced to sing,
The railroad was a finished thing,



So folks could step forth from the door
Of private home, hotel, or store,
And take the train at leisure there
And still have time and breath to spare.

When next the train came down that way
There was some doubt, if not dismay,
When no familiar points were seen,
For which the eye is ever keen.

With hands upon the wheel in dread
The brakeman's eyes stood from his head,
The poor conductor, rattled more,
Was punching tickets o'er and o'er.
The engineer, who thought he knew
The road as well as I know you,
Was puzzled much to find so great
A curve where all had been so straight.
He blew the whistle, strained his eyes,
Put on the brakes in great surprise,



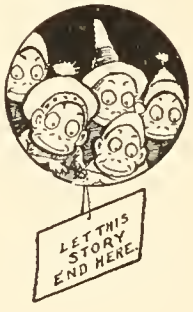
'T is not the weight of flesh or bone
That makes the man, or sprite, alone.

Shut off the steam, and was about
Upon the point of jumping out,
Believing in his heart it led
To some deep ditch or river bed!
But when it stopped, as he could see,
Close to the town where it should be,
He hardly knew what should be done,
Stay in the cab, or jump and run.
The company, of course, were wild,
And blamed the town, and papers filed
And would have gone to law, no doubt,
If they had proof to help them out;



Who cares what 's seen upon Mars' crust,
Canals or caves?
Earth claims our dust.

But having nothing of the kind
They very wisely changed their mind—
For there was mystery, that few
If any, could see fairly through;
And so the bags of mail were dropped
And baggage where the train had stopped,
And then the station was moved down
And stands to-day beside the town.





THE BROWNIES AID THE EXPEDITION



THE Brownies stood upon the pier
Where lay a ship for half a year,
Waiting repairs and funds to send
It to the earth's remotest end,
Some unknown seas, perhaps, to strike
Or find out what the pole is like.
The hull was sound,
the greater part,
Although some planks
began to start,
The yards were up of
timber tough,
Some ropes there were,
but not enough,
She had a fair supply
of spars,
Her masts were pointing at the stars,





Oft sailors fall a prey
indeed,
To sharks on land no
sea could breed.

But things above and things below
Were wanting and the funds were low.

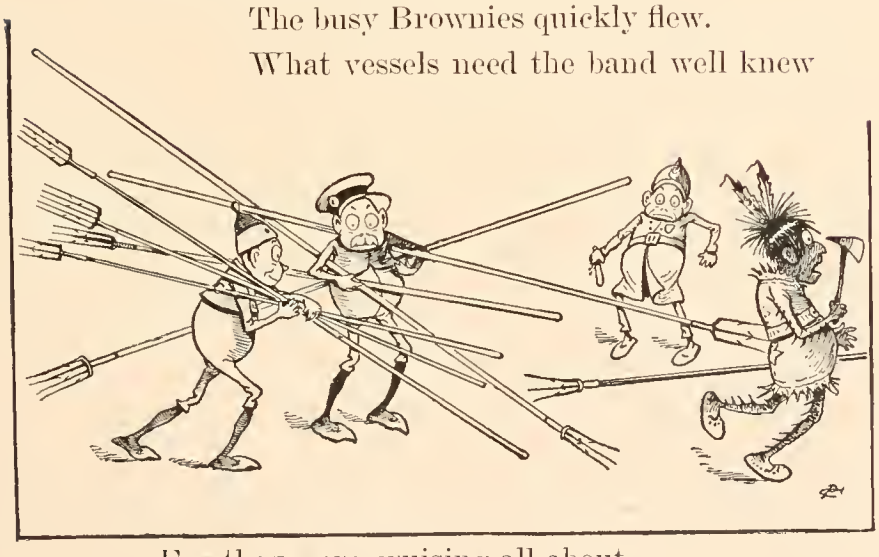


Said one, "This vessel which has rolled
On many seas is growing old,
While waiting to be rigged in shape
To brave the dangers of the cape.

And push its way through ice and snow
To gather facts the world should know."
Another said, "Had we been near
Some months ago she 'd not be here,
But plowing through some wondrous sea,
And well supplied as she should be.
We 'll turn attention to the case
And fit her out in shortest space.
She 'll go out with the morning tide
With every missing want supplied.
So put the mystic band to work,
Such tasks the Brownies never shirk."
Then up the lane and down the street
To butcher shops in search of meat,
To chandler shops, where things are found
That ships require the world around,
The busy Brownies quickly flew.
What vessels need the band well knew

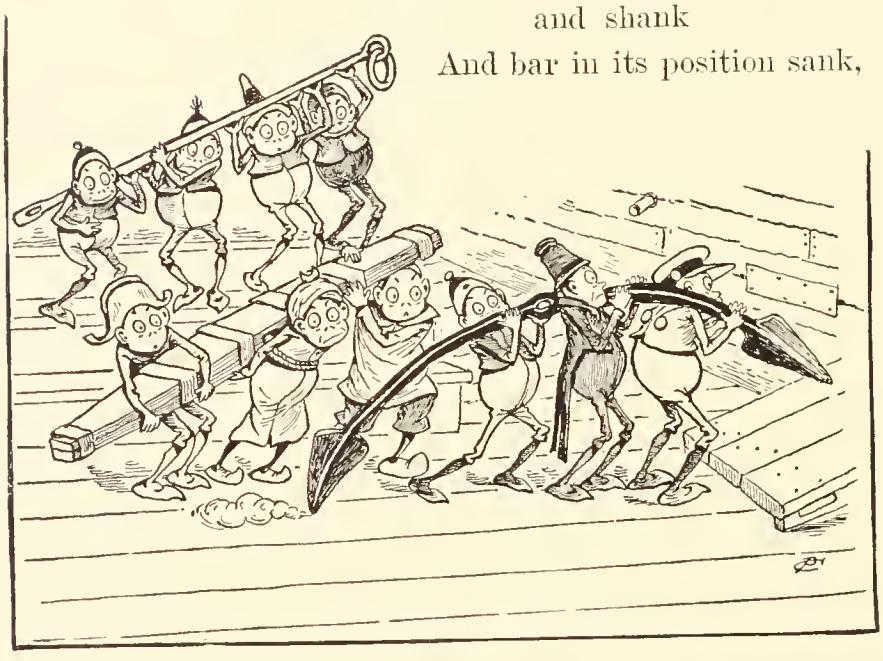


In storms at sea, small gifts seem great,
An oar is worth a whole estate.



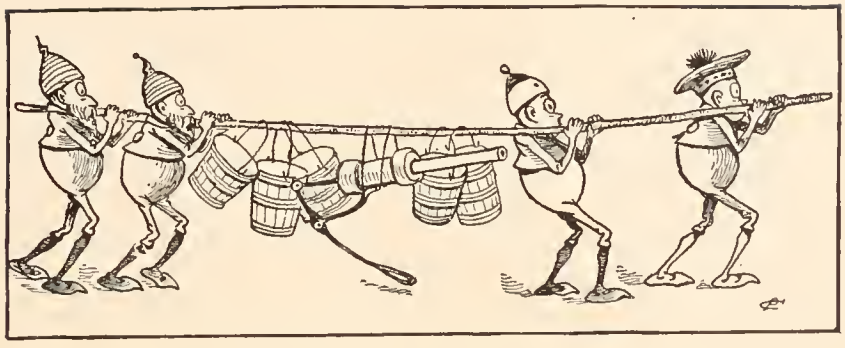
For they were cruising all about
Ere you were born, I have no doubt.

They took the anchor up with care
In sections, and all bore their share,
And soon on board each fluke and shank
And bar in its position sank,

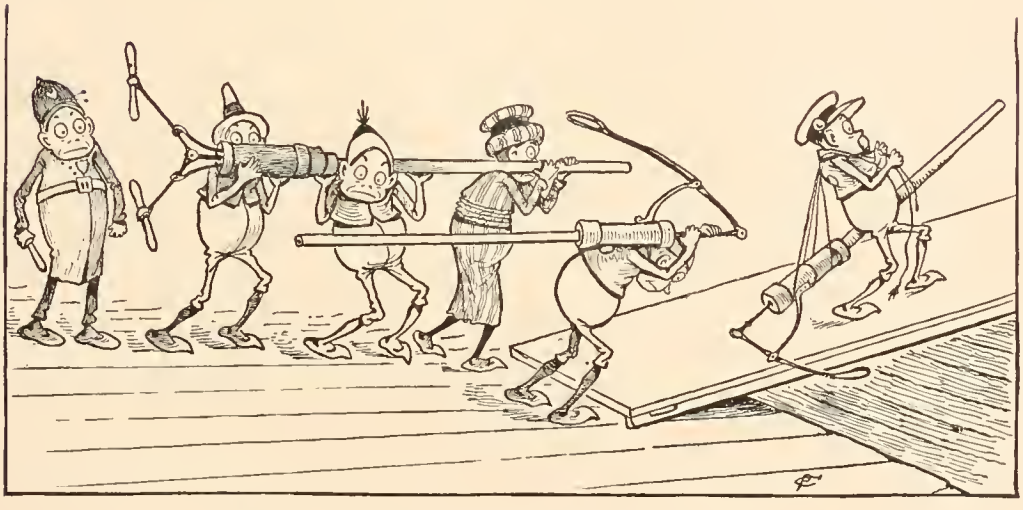


Till it was ready to take hold
And save the ship when breakers rolled.
"The ship," cried one, "may be too weak,
And strain its ribs, and spring a leak,
And in that case a pump or two
Will be of value to the crew.





While storms are raging far from land,
Supplies like these come well in hand,

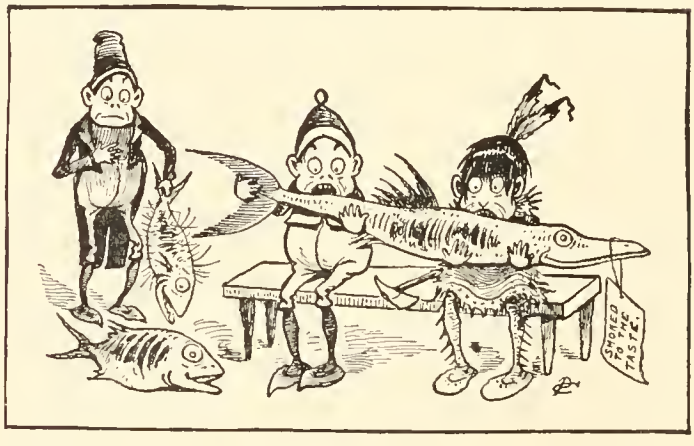


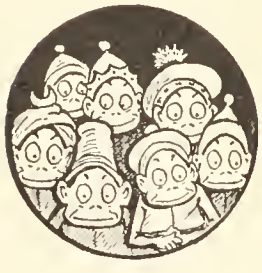
Where every stroke may save a life
And bring one home to child or wife,
To nothing say of cargo great
Brought into port in perfect state."
Provisions of the choicest kind
That store could yield, or seekers find,
Were put away for that round trip
Where storms would long delay the ship,



And sailors must have
strengthening food—
The best there was,
was none too good.
Some carried fish but
newly caught
While other bags and
barrels brought
And salted down the
plenteous catch
Which soon was stowed
below the hatch.

While some the casks
and cases rolled
Around the deck, or
down the hold,
Some in the rigging
crawled about
To take things in, or
let things out.
For only those who
canvas spread
Had any business
overhead.

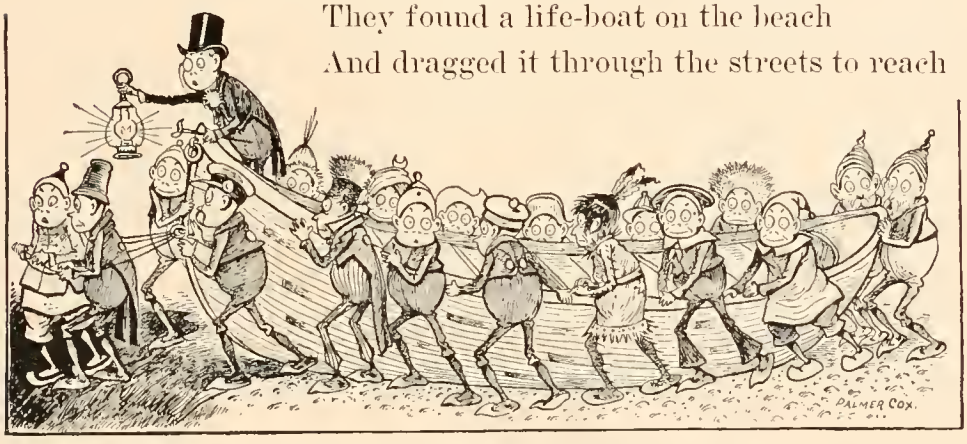




Some found their work among the spars,
And some brought bedding for the tars,
And more among the ropes seemed lost
That must be had at any cost.
The binnacle and compass cased,
In which the sailor's trust is placed,



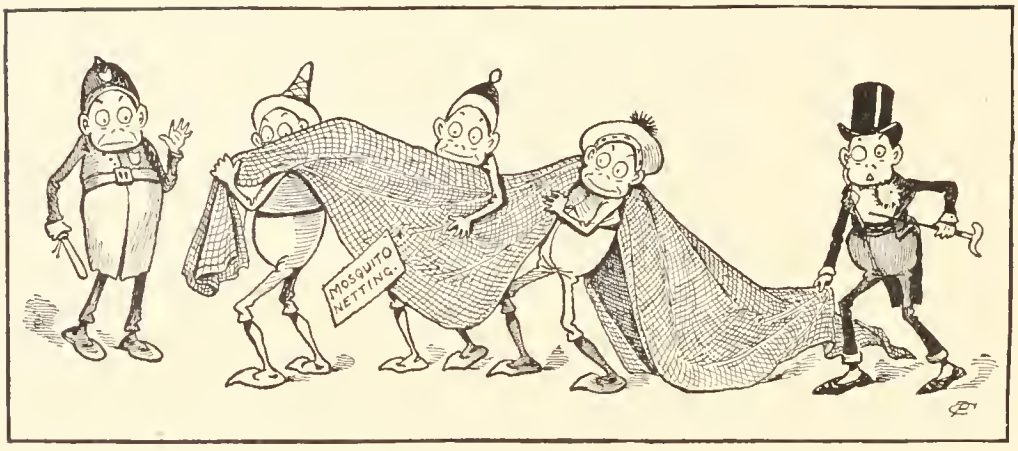
Were hurried to their proper stand
For those who should the ship command.
They found a life-boat on the beach
And dragged it through the streets to reach





The ship, without a splash or bend
Of oar or paddle, to the end.
Said one, "They 'll want to go ashore
To plant a mark, if nothing more,
When they have reached their distant goal
(Which is, no doubt, the frozen pole),

So they can prove in later days
They reached the point and won the praise."



"Perhaps," said one, "mosquitoes there
May revel in the frosty air,
Unlike our own, and breed and thrive
Through every change and keep alive.
Now some fine netting should be found
In case the pests should swarm around."
Another cried, "Some spears may be
Of service in that icy sea;
Then if a fish is slow to rise
The crew may spear him where he lies.
And naught should go without a test
For navigators earn the best;
The very best that 's in the store
This ship shall bear away from shore."
Another said, who viewed the scene
And what was crowded decks between,



The hermit-crab,
usurper fell,
From weaker creatures
takes the shell.

"We can't go with them South or North
But well supplied they sally forth—
Of that we 'll make no sad mistake
While there 's abundance we can take."
To put on paper all that went
Between the decks with good intent,
Would tax the pen and
ink, and strain
The most receptive eye
and brain.







Be careful of the
Brownie band
They'll have the Nation yet in hand.

The bread, the fish, smoked or in brine,
The plummets, and the fathom line,
The tools to mend the careless break,
The cures for pain and stomach ache,
Were carried on, or quickly rolled
Into their places in the hold.
The gangway was a lively show
With everything upon the go.
Some Brownies lost their loads, of course,
For those behind pushed with some force,

And those not ready to defend
Themselves could no assistance lend.
In other ways misfortune showed,
When casks gave out, and liquid flowed.



But though the Brownies did their best
The stars were sinking in the west.
First Saturn bade the rogues good-night,
Gave one long stare, and slipped from sight;
And next the Twins looked on awhile,
And could not pass without a smile;
It looked as if Orion shook
His club, and his departure took;
The dog-star seemed to yelp aloud
Then ran to hide behind a cloud;
And all the stars grew indistinct
For at that moment Venus winked.
Then slow but sure the sky grew bare
And left the Brownies struggling there.
Said one, "The rising of the sun
Is very near, but we are done.





If we could analyze mankind
Perhaps some worthy traits we'd find.

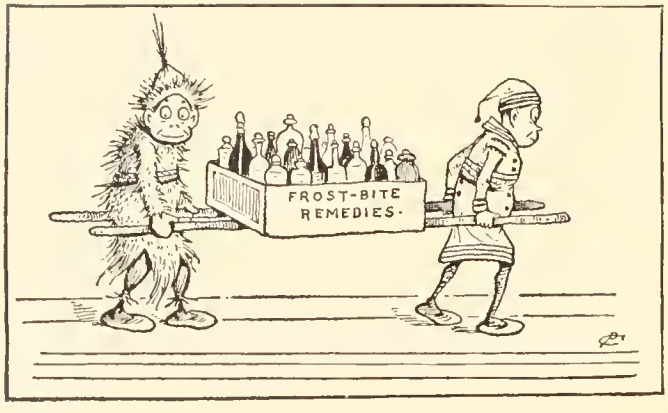


I would not be afraid," said he,
"To take my chances on the sea
Upon a ship with half the load
Of food that on this boat is stowed.

The captain now could pipe his crew
Upon the deck, if all he knew,
Each take his station fore and aft,
Shake out the canvas on the craft,
Cast off the line, then catch the breeze,
And point her prow for unknown seas,
To wonders seek and glories find
And facts to benefit mankind."
The elf-band did not linger round
To learn what seas the ship had found,



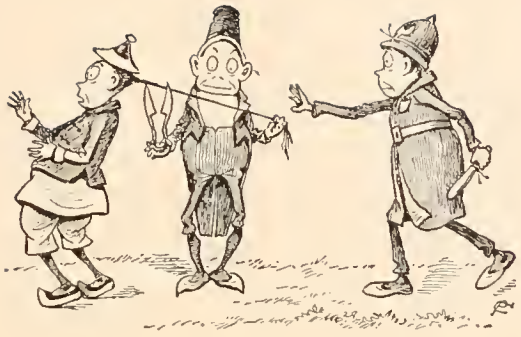
When seas are rough,
the sinner prays,
When seas are smooth,
his cards he plays.

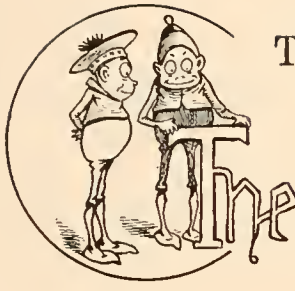


Nor wait until reports
had trailed
Back to the port from
which she sailed,
For other business
seemed to spring
Each night and fresher
duties bring.
And they were doubtless
far away
Before the ship had
left the bay.

Thus Brownies give good folk a start,
Then let them carry out their part,
Leaving a thousand hints behind
To teach wise lessons to mankind.

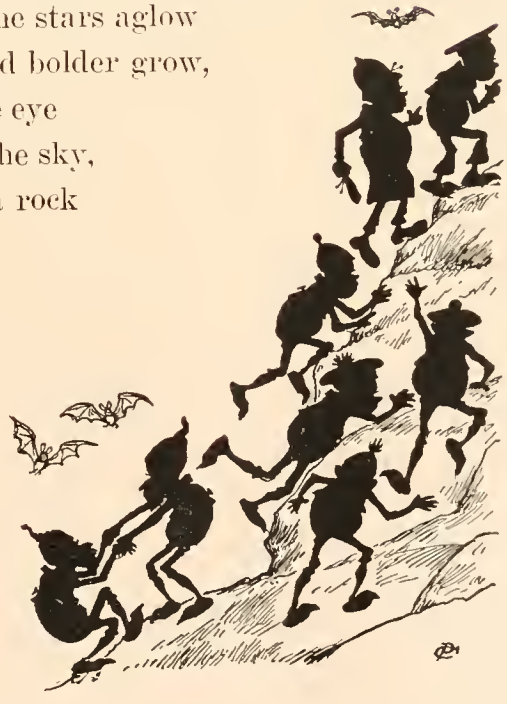




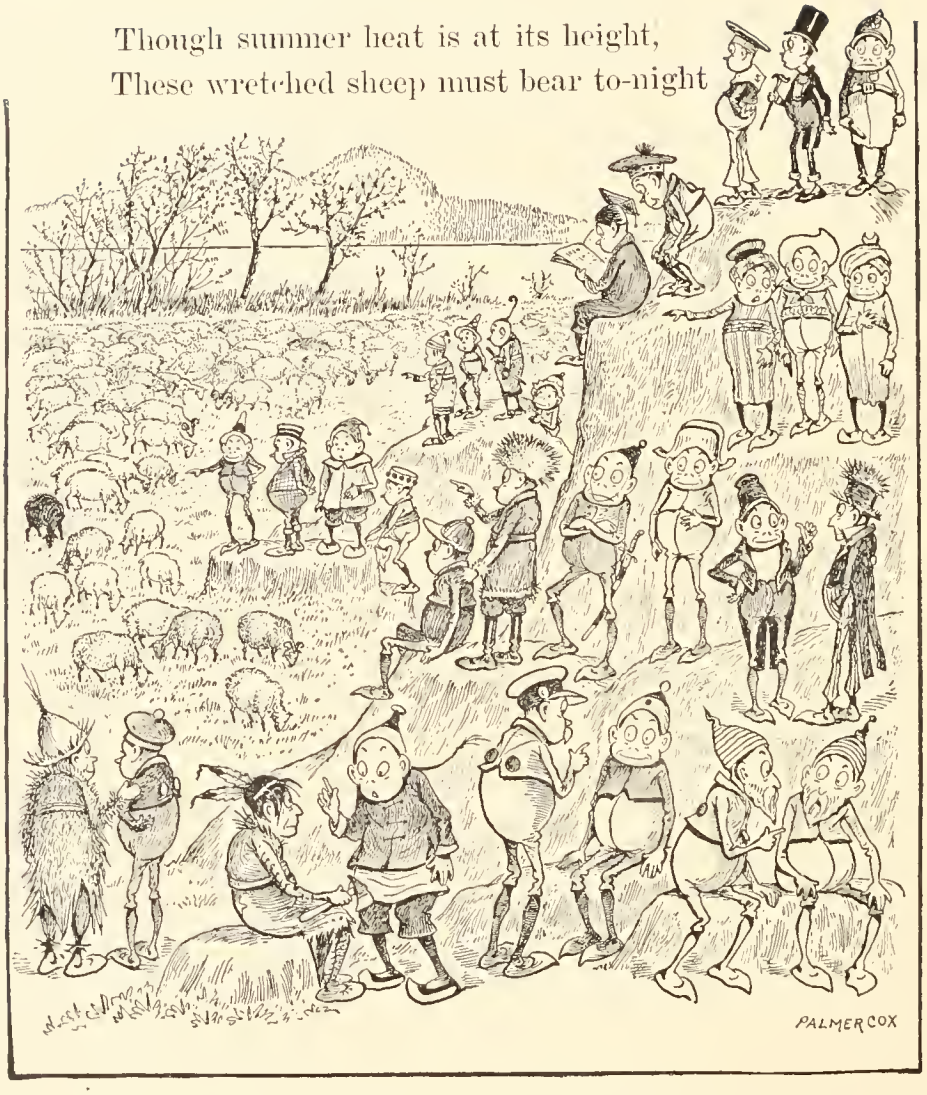


THE BROWNIES SHEARING SHEEP

The SUMMER sun had dropped to rest
Behind the mountains in the west,
And one by one the stars aglow
Began to bold and bolder grow,
And seemed alert to catch the eye
Of those who cared to view the sky,
As Brownies climbed upon a rock
And gazed upon
a grazing flock;
And made remarks,
as Brownies will,
About their treatment,
good or ill.
Said one, "A great
neglect is there,
And shameful lack of
proper care



Though summer heat is at its height,
These wretched sheep must bear to-night



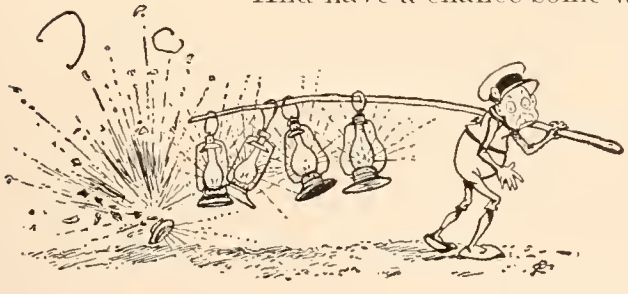
A weight of wool would keep them warm
Throughout the winter's bitterest storm."
Another said, "Leave it to me
To cure the evil all can see;
I know a place where shears are kept,
(I 've even seen them since I slept),



Some new, some old, but all indeed,
In proper shape to serve our need.
We can do much before the glow
Of morning, as we Brownies know.
We 'll get the shears this very eve
And give relief before we leave."



Some ran for ropes, and others went
For shears that all might be content,
And have a chance some work to do,
Although to most, the task was new.
The night was dark and it was found
An aid to have some lights around,



So lanterns played
a brilliant part
And did good service
at the start.
Some volunteered
instruction kind
To those who 'd surely
trouble find,
When sheep would
struggle for
release
Before they parted
from their fleece.
Think you there was
a long delay



Before the work was under way?
Think you the stars, so apt to wink,
Found nothing strange at which to blink?



Had you been there
with second sight
You would have stared,
as well, that night.
According to the
shearer's plan,
To catch the sheep,
they first began,
But flocks, however
much they may
Need clipping close, still
want their way,



And lanterns will not always draw
A creature round that knows no law,



The rattling, and the flood of light,
Uniting caused a general fright.
In truth it was enough to make
The flock their native hills forsake,
To ford the stream, or leap the gate,
That kept them from a neighboring State.
And Brownies felt they could not let
Their well-laid plans be so upset,

And so some sheep lost half their fleece
Before they settled down in peace.



'Tis not an easy task, indeed,
To catch a sheep which runs with speed;
The mountain goat has got a name
For bounding fast, when sought as game,
And Brownies found each woolly beast
Was cousin to the goat, at least,
And even closer ties might trace
Before they finished with the chase.
Of course the work to some was new
Who came from lands where flocks were few,





Who hardly could the fact declare
If sheep, indeed, grew wool or hair,
Or whether it was right or wrong
To wear it all the summer long;
But short the school the Brownies need
To learn the way they should proceed
The task of some was but to bring
The creatures up by strap or string



To those more fit to handle shears,
Or those who best could calm their fears.

But some old rams soon made it known,
That they had notions of their own,
And were content to worry through
The heat another month or two,
Much rather than let sprites like these
Hold them an hour between their knees,
To pull and roll and clip from hide
The coat that nature does provide.
Some sheep escaped and time improved,
Before the fleece was all removed,
And Brownies had a lively run
To finish work but partly done.



If Satan had a score
of wings
He couldn't answer all
the rings.



It chanced some rams were cross and strong,
Whose heads were hard, and horns were long,
And they caused trouble more or less
And bawled with anger and distress,
While timid sprites stood to one side
Fearing the rams that stamped in pride,
Denied the battle and the sport
That entertained the braver sort.

But even rams for all their rage
And twisted horns, that told their age,
In spite of anger, strength, and years,
Were brought in time beneath the shears;
For when such mystic powers combine
'T is best all effort to resign,
And realize one must submit
Till work is done, and Brownies quit.
'T was clipping here, and clipping there,
And rolling over everywhere,



Turning and twisting round to feel
The pressure of the busy steel;
Now head below,
and heels upright
And next the shaking
tail in sight;



And ere the creature rightly knew
What all this meant, the job was through,
And bare it ran, the grass to find,
But left its woolly coat behind.
One Brownie said, "There 's quite a knack
In keeping sheep upon the back
With feet in air for half the night
Still pointing at the planets bright.
But thanks to charms that we can use,
Compliance seldom they refuse,
So thus the work is light and fast
And we accomplish wonders vast."
The mystic touch, the mystic twist



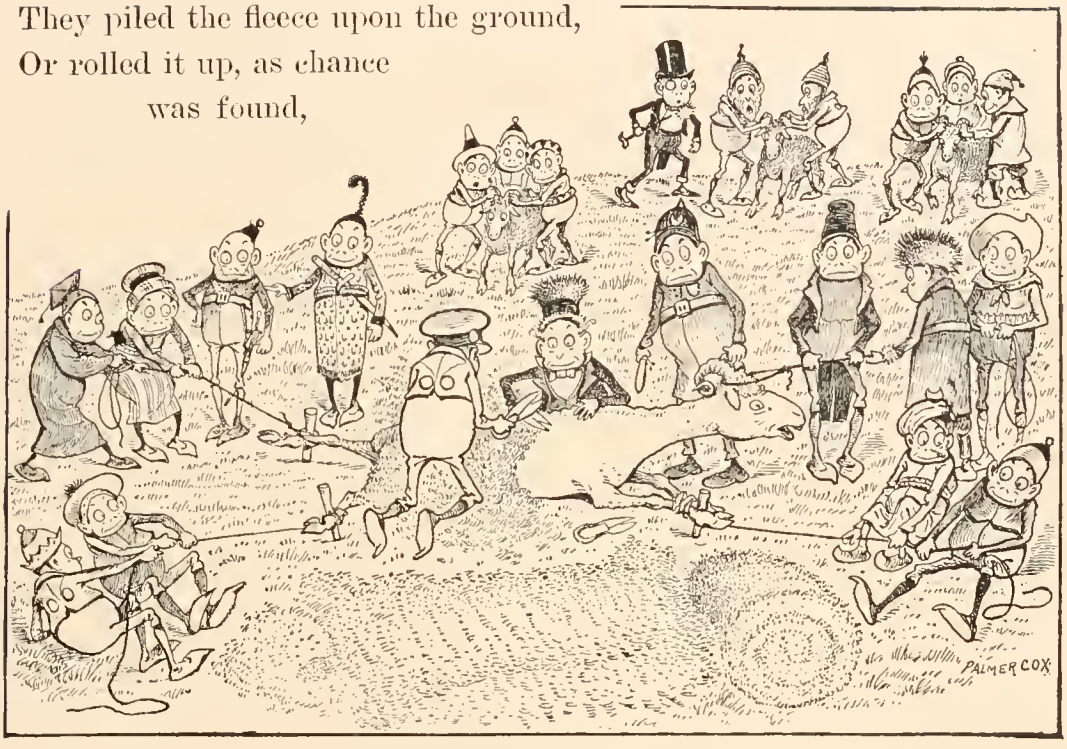
What 's war but setting matters right,
That could be fixed before the fight?

That dwells in every Brownie's wrist,
Was far too much for common sheep
To understand, however deep,
And soon a passive heap they lay
And let the Brownies have their way.

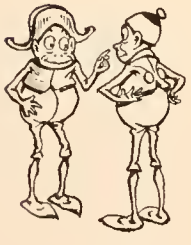


Well, you and I, who something know
Of how they worked long years ago,

Can judge how time was valued dear
By Brownies, when the way was clear.
They piled the fleece upon the ground,
Or rolled it up, as chance
was found,



Upon the rocks or hillocks nigh
Where it would catch the shepherd's eye,
And prompt attention might receive,
After the elf-band took its leave.



Who deepest digs, the borer tells,
Will surely drain all shallower wells.

And what the shepherd said that morn,
When he perceived his sheep were shorn;
Or what he thought, when from his rock
He cast his eyes upon the flock,
And counted heads and found that all
Were there to answer to his call,

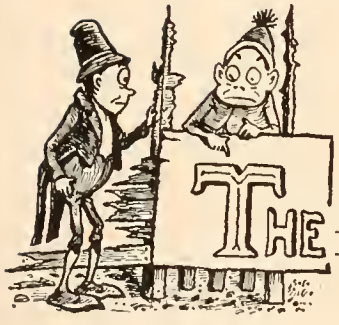
We 'll never know, for Brownies fled,
When morning in the sky was red.
The sheep were bare, and bleating fast,
As if to tell through what they pass'd.
What could he say? What could he do,
But call for aid? and feebly, too,
For fear was shaking both his knees,
His conscience sure was ill at ease,
And as they gathered up the wool
That lay in heaps or wagonsful
Upon the grass, arranged with care,
Or laid apart for sun and air,
Said he, "There were strange doings here
While we were sleeping soundly near,
And though there 's not a sight or sound
Of Brownies, they have been around."



The master's eye, if well applied,
Will keep his treasure chest supplied.



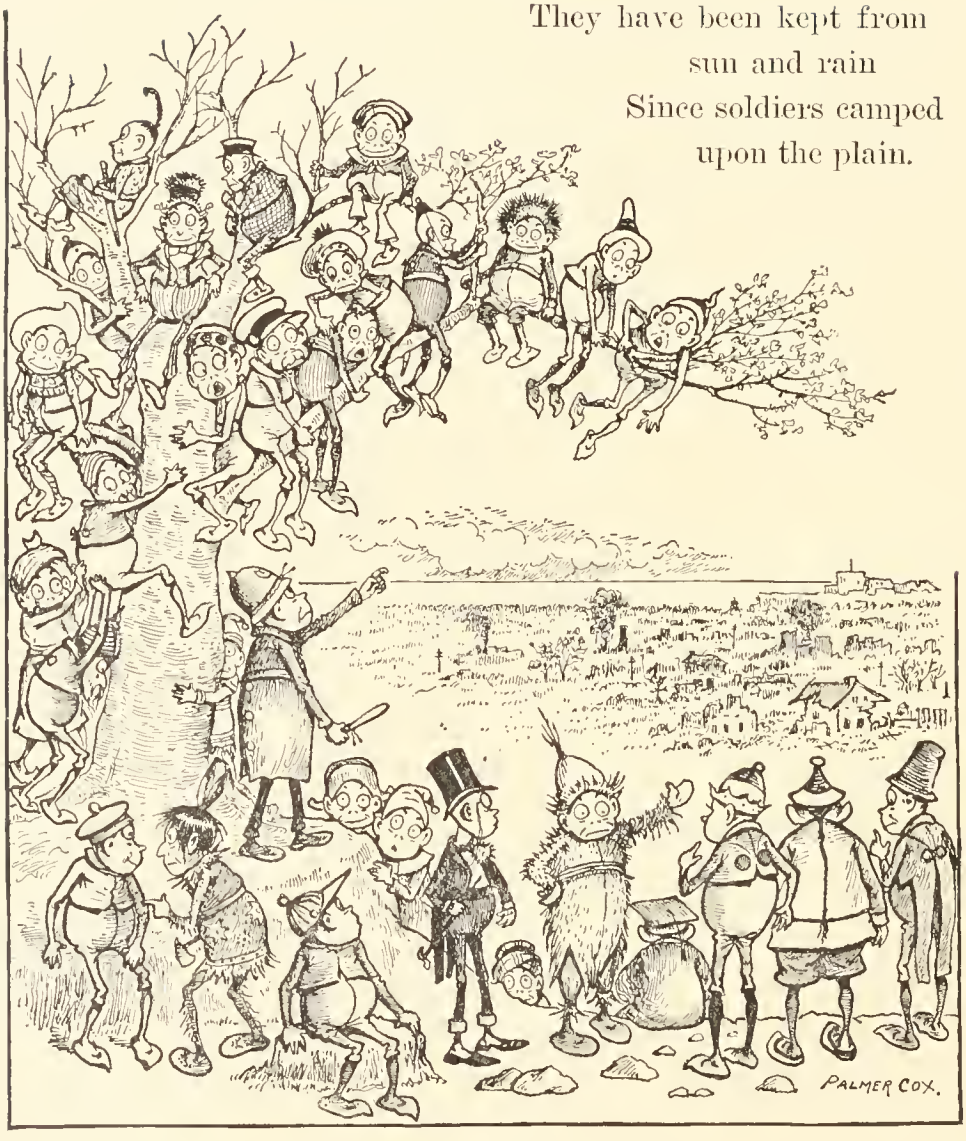




THE BROWNIES AND THE BURNED VILLAGE

THE DAYLIGHT closed as Brownies found
A village burned quite to the ground;
A cottage here, a pile of wood,
A gate or fence were all that stood;
And people scattered here and there
Received a friend's or neighbor's care.
When Brownies came, the scene was bad,
And every face was more than sad,
As they beheld the depth of woe
An hour or two of flame can show.
Said one, "The fort down by the shore
Has many army tents in store;





The holes in some, exposed to view,
Show where the bullets whistled through,
And tell that near the line of fight
They took the volleys left and right."

"We 'll go to-night!" another cried,
"And tents for homeless folk provide.
We 'll carry all our arms can hold,
And ask no leave from sentries bold.
Let soldiers sleep, and take their rest,
In time of peace it suits them best;
Their country's call may come once more,
But till that summons, let them snore.
What care we now for secret knock,
For bayonet-point, or click of lock?
We 'll pass the watchful sentry there,
And leave him jabbing at the air;



The grasping hand can cause more tears
Than one that shakes a dozen spears.



We 'll carry out the tents at will,
Which guards believe in store-house still;
They 'll know no more about our raid,
Than if at home in bed we stayed.
And so, with nothing left to fear,
We 'll simply bring the canvas here,
The tent-pins and the poles, as well,
And put work through in shortest spell—
For half the night as you may spy,
By stars above, has passed us by.
The will is ours to do the deed,
The strength to serve us at our need,
For when to act we are inclined,
We ask no favors of mankind."
How can we hide from sprites like these
Who move unseen, and where they please,
Know where you put your savings by,
And where you keep your cake and pie?





And if they chose to do you harm,
The power they have, and hold the charm;
'T is well they 're friendly, and employ
Their power to aid and not destroy,
For what a Brownie wants, he gains
In spite of locks, and bolts, and chains.
To take a fort by day or night
But seldom brings unmixed delight,
And even Brownies were aware
That danger might be lurking there.



It was not long, we may believe,
Until the band, not asking leave,
Had reached the fort where tents were stored
Since cruel war had sheathed the sword.
Said one, "It was a painful sight
To see the homeless people's plight;
The children shivering in the storm,
And wrapped in muslin far from warm."

For glad were parents to escape
And save their babes in any shape!
Some said they knew (and so they did),
The place a secret ditch was hid,





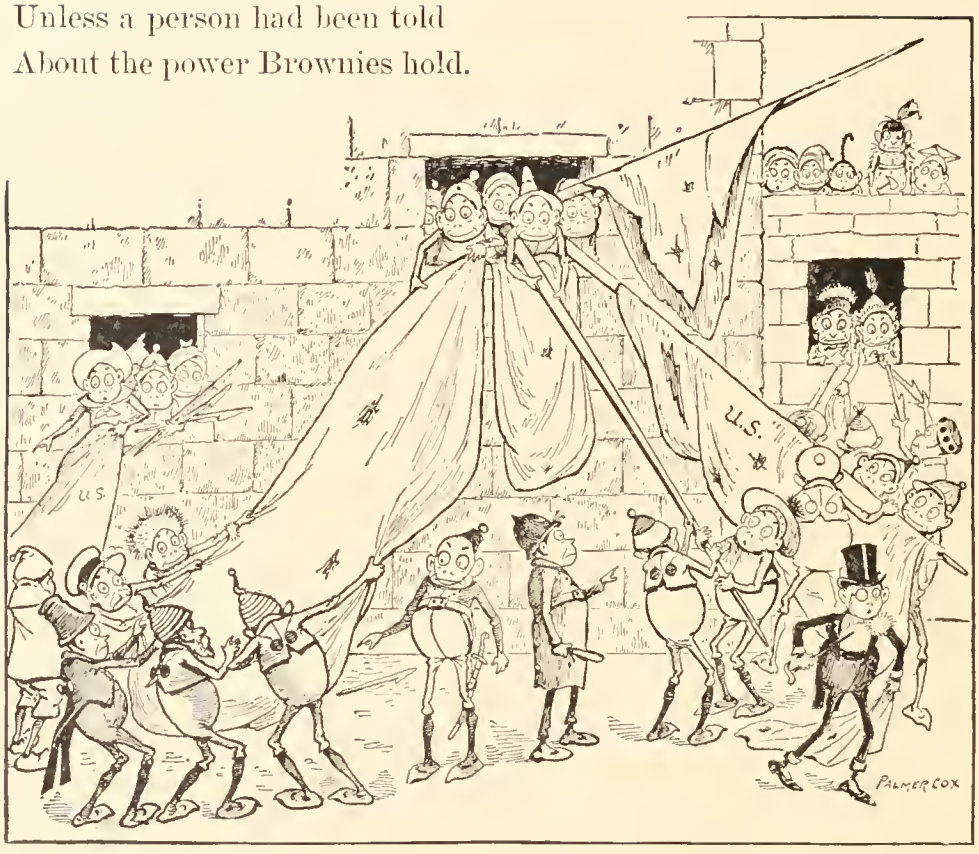
Which was the surest way to win
Into the fort and all within.
Along the dark and secret lane
That did away with climb or strain,
The Brownies soon were crowding keen
Beneath the vines and briars green,
Disturbing creatures of the night
That flapped away in heavy flight.

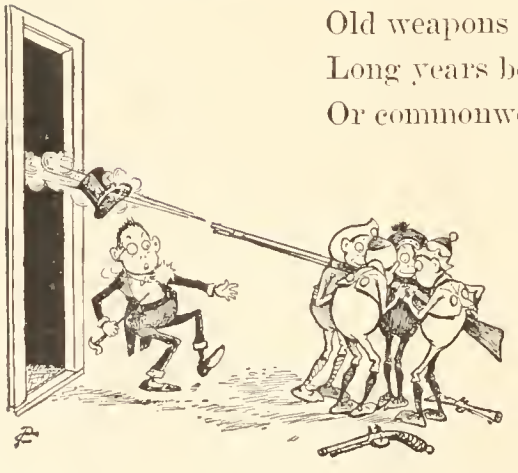


The early bird may get the prize, Unless the worm is early wise.

Out came the pins, out came the poles,
At different heights and different holes;
Out came the tents that showed what shot
Had done in battles now forgot.
And what a loading-up was there!
More than a back was fit to bear—

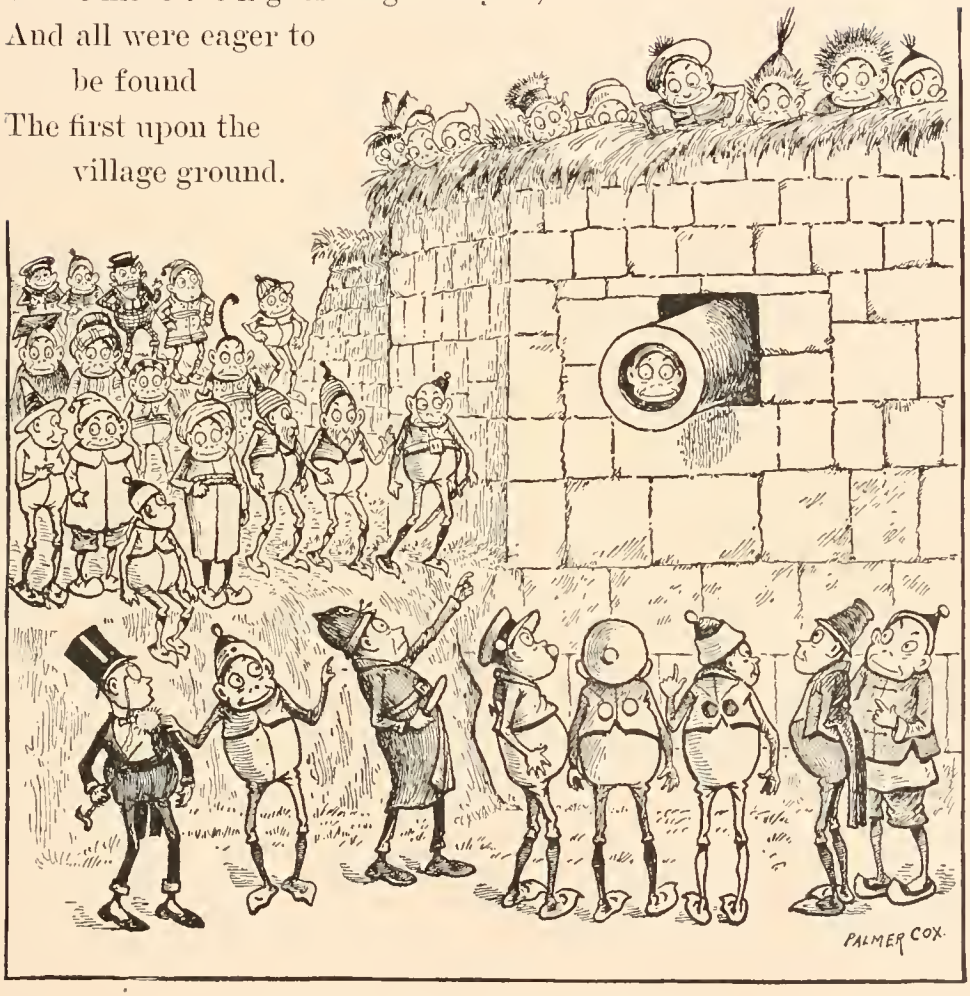
Unless a person had been told
About the power Brownies hold.





Old weapons which had service seen
Long years before for king, or queen,
Or commonwealth, as it might be,
Proved tempting in a high degree;
And some no little pleasure found
In bearing such old relics 'round;
They took some battle-flags along,—
Indeed, I do not think it wrong
Because the banners needed air,
If nothing more, in way of care.

The band, along the country road,
Moved, struggling with their heavy load.
A number took the lower grade,
While more the higher ridge essayed;
And all were eager to
be found
The first upon the
village ground.



The birds of night were startled by
The strange parade, and could but fly
Around and 'round in hopes to gain
The reason for the curious train.

From such a move it seemed but fair
To think that war was in the air;
A broken legion in full rout,
Fleeing the foe, and tuckered out,
Could hardly show a scene more wild
Than did the band, as on they filed.





To load the gun, or
draw the blade,
Is what gives thou-
sands to the spade.

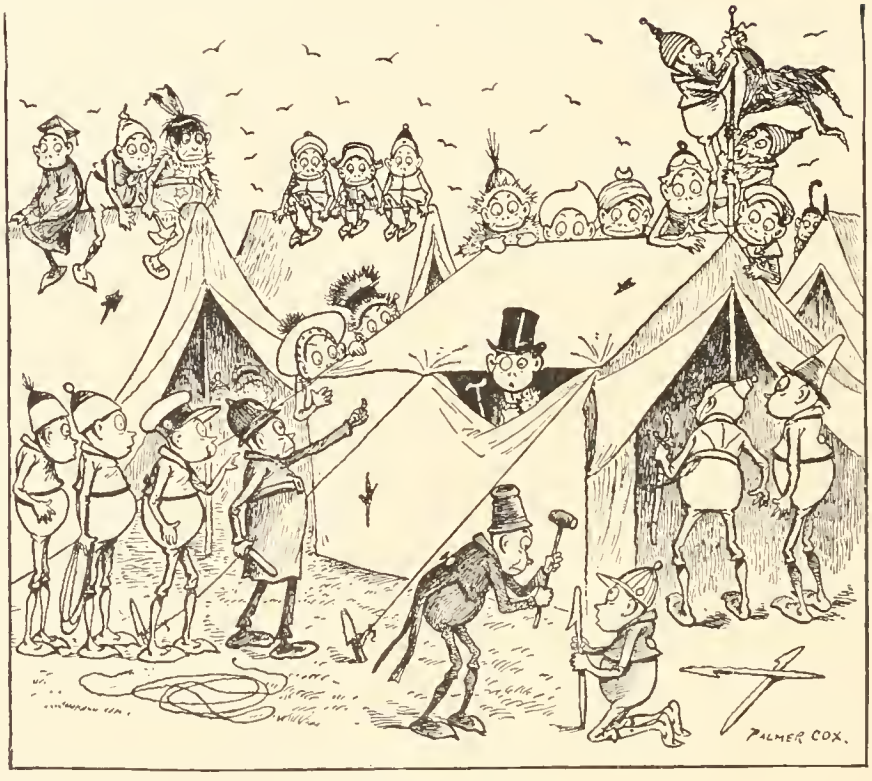
"There 'll be a stir," said one, "we know,
Around the fort when bugles blow;
The call to arms will ring out clear,
While scattered troops are hurried near;
And guns, poked from embrasures dark,
That shoot for miles and hit the mark.
They 'll wonder who, without alarm,
Could take the tents, nor suffer harm.
Suppose from this a war should spread,
And shake the nation to its head!"

Soon in the park, or village square,
The sweeping blaze was forced to spare
Because it offered nothing good
To spread the flames, in paint or wood,
The Brownies gathered and began
To quickly carry out their plan.



Up went the poles on every side,
And down went pins in earth to hide;
Blow upon blow they dealt like rain
With hands that rarely strike in vain.

To spread the canvas for a roof,
That should be strong and weather-proof,

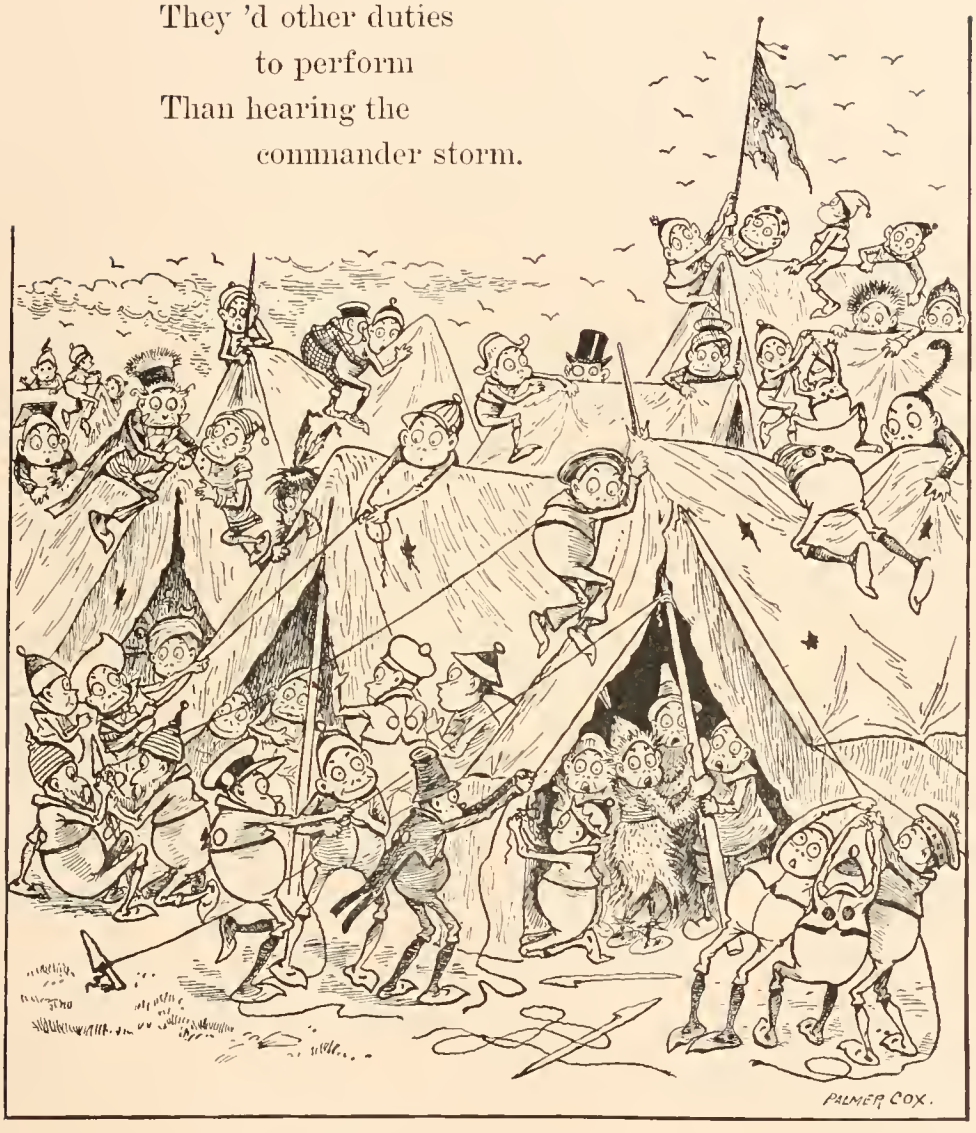


Gave great delight, and willing hands
Were quick to answer all demands.

When morning light crept
o'er the lawn
The tents were up, the
Brownies gone.
Be sure the elf-band
did not wait
To learn the sentries'
sorry fate;



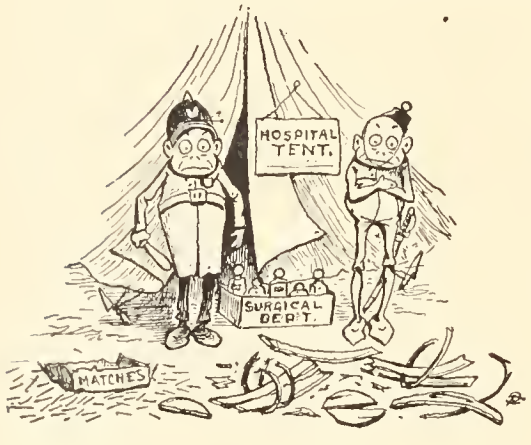
They 'd other duties
to perform
Than hearing the
commander storm.



Upon the hill, as they withdrew,
Some glances back the Brownies threw,
And smiled to see the pleasing show
Of army tents spread out below.

They felt repaid, for they could boast
Beneath was shelter for a host,





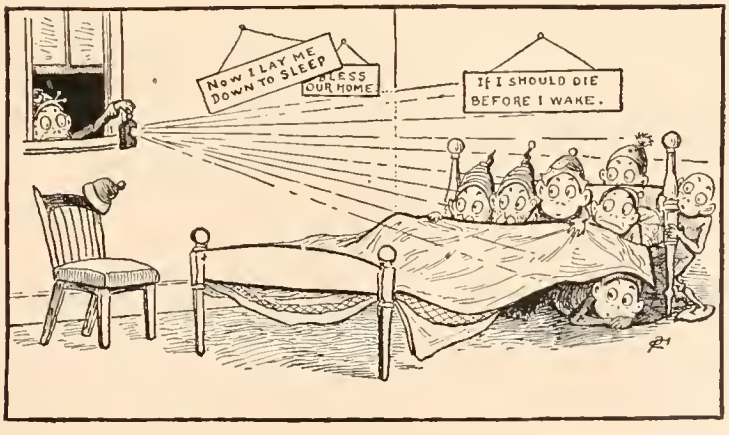
Where aged folk and children small
Could now find comfort, one and all.
Unlike mankind that honors claim,
And hate to bear their share of blame,
The Brownies on each other threw
The praise that to themselves was due,
Congratulating, as they might,
Their comrades on their work
that night.



They shook each other's hands in glee,
While compliments were passing free.
They said they envied not mankind,
With all their gifts and arts
combined,
But were content to pass their days
As Brownies with their mystic ways.
Next day the homeless ran to claim
The tents, and marveled how they came;



And one remarked, when speech he found,
"Perhaps the Brownies were around."
The band had business otherwhere
The night that followed that affair,
But all with one accord believed
That much distress they had relieved,
And taught a lesson, which we fear
Was wasted on the brigadier.

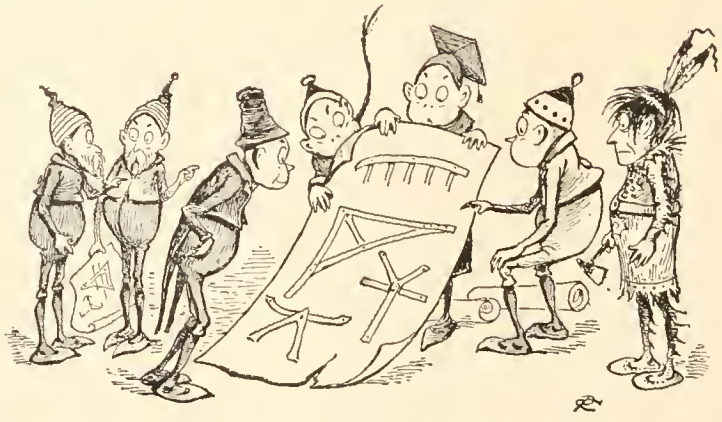




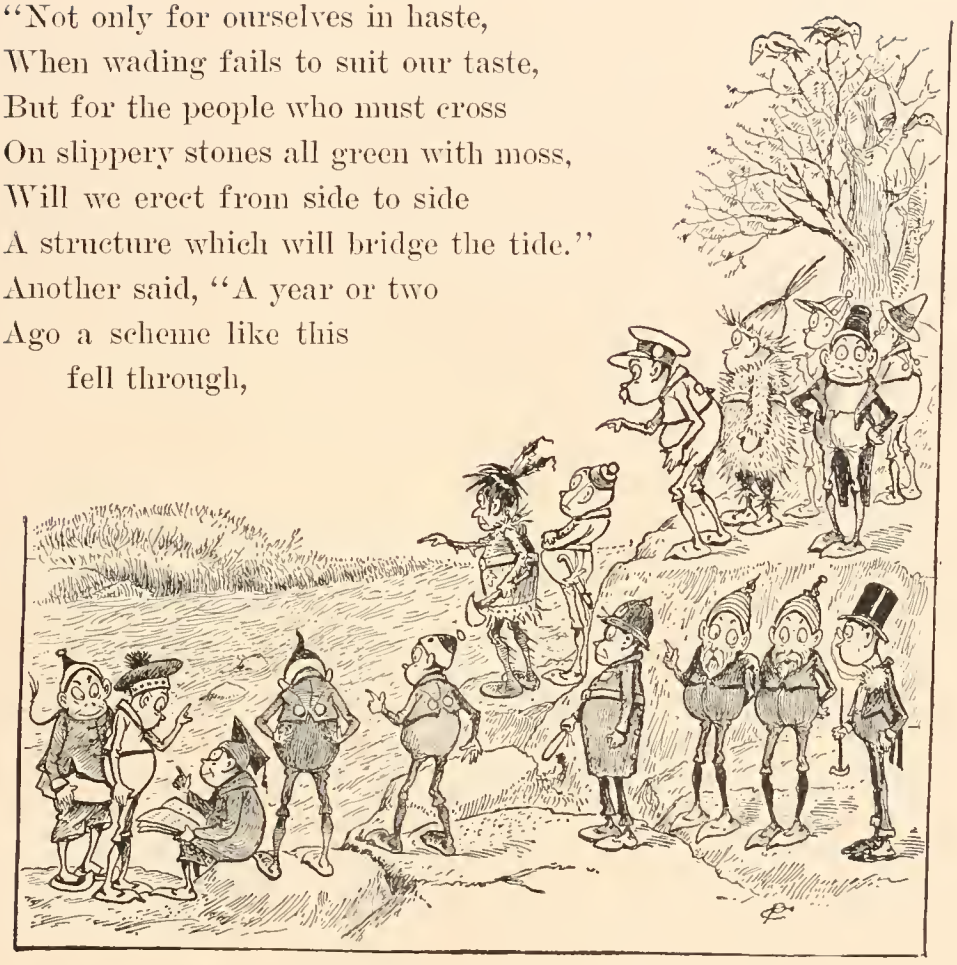


THE BROWNIES BUILD A BRIDGE

BUILD a bridge from shore to shore
Across a stream where waters pour
In haste to mix their sparkling flow
With ocean waves some miles below,
Is not a task to waken fear
Or questions in an engineer.
Then why should doubt oppress a band
Who have all kinds of trades at hand,
When they have in
their heads
a scheme
To throw a bridge
across the
stream?
Said one, as they stood
by the place,
And watched the water
in its race,



"Not only for ourselves in haste,
When wading fails to suit our taste,
But for the people who must cross
On slippery stones all green with moss,
Will we erect from side to side
A structure which will bridge the tide."
Another said, "A year or two
Ago a scheme like this
fell through,

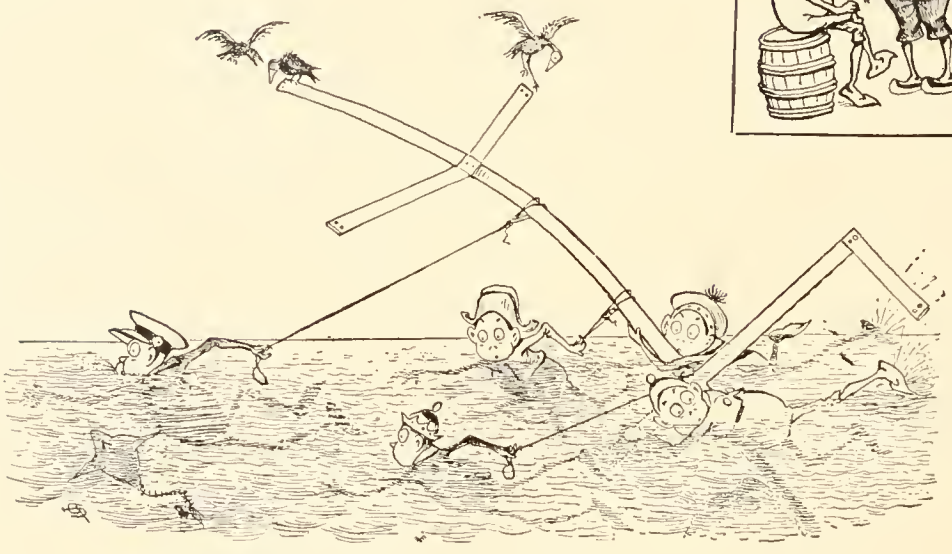




But workmen left their things about
To carry on the plan laid out.
We 'll take the stuff from where it lies
And build a bridge for a surprise.
When in the morning people flock
To cross the stream, they 'll have a shock.
'T will be a joy to leave the log,
The stone, and water to the frog,

And cross upon our airy way
Without a cent of toll to pay."





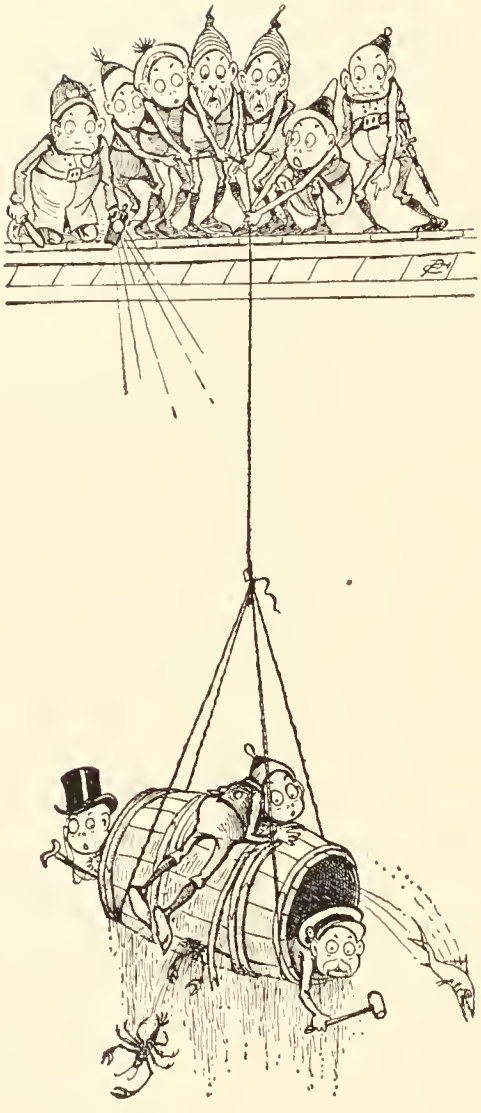
Material was near at hand
Which was good fortune for the band,
And soon a stream of Brownies flowed
Both to and fro—some with a load,
And more in haste to heed the cry
Of those whose arms were piled too high.



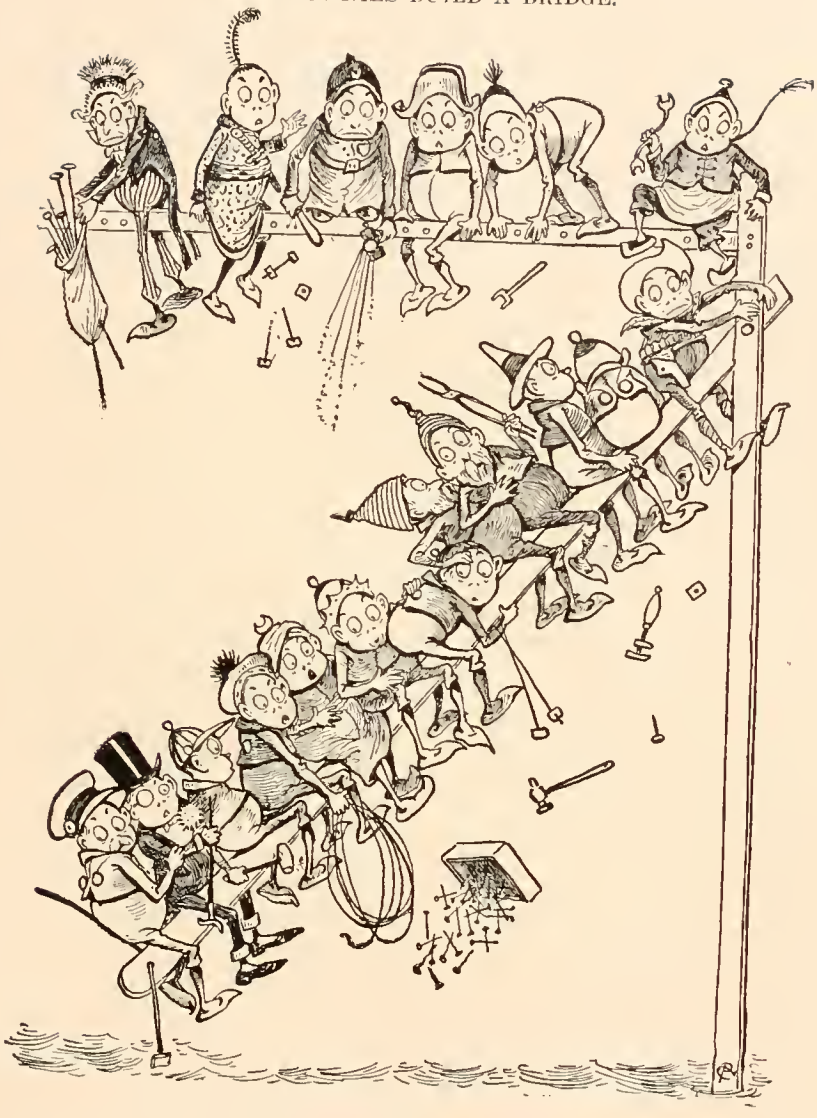
But willing hands
are never slow
And soon the bridge
began to grow.
Some in mid-air the
birds surprised
Swinging on ropes with
hooks devised.



To make things safe, if that could be—
'T was an exciting thing to see!
Indeed a Brownie without guy,
Or safety hitch, or fixture nigh,
Swinging and turning is, I say,
A sight to take the breath away.



At times a hammer,
bolt, or bar
Would slip and spread
a panic far.
Perhaps a wrench would
rattle down
And light upon
a Brownie's crown,
While bending at some
labor there
That called for all his
time and care—
Then skip half way
the span across
To splash into the
stream, a loss.
But work in air at
risk of neck
Does not the Brownie
courage check,
And in the mine or in
the cloud,
Of their condition they
are proud.
Said one, "There 's
pleasure in
the task
That gives folks aid before they ask;
'T is well to keep an open eye
To note a want or hardship nigh,



For none can help from Brownies seek,
And we must let our actions speak.
So drive the bolt in overhead
And turn the nut to tighter thread,
We 'll give the people round a chance
Across the swinging bridge to dance."

But talk fell in with ringing stroke
And turning wrench, and never broke



Or checked the rush that was begun,
And would keep up till all was done.
And what the Brownies build will stay
In spite of winds that round it play,
And whistle in the loudest key
As they come rushing from the sea.
It took long ropes, a pull, a heave
With mystic hands, one may believe,
To check the sinking or the drift,
And sections to their stations lift.
How rivets found their proper place,
And so, too, every rod and brace,
Without mistake, or fuss or clatter,
We 'll never know—but that 's no matter.



Uphold the name of
him who fails,
Lest yours be wanting
in the scales.

Then speed if ever was required
To bring the finish they desired,
Then blows were doubled, loads increased,
And he did best who said the least.
Some sections tumbled from the top
And rod, and brace, together drop.
And working tools—a perilous slip—
That on the frame, still held their grip,
And being steel, as now appears,
Increased the Brownies' toil and fears.

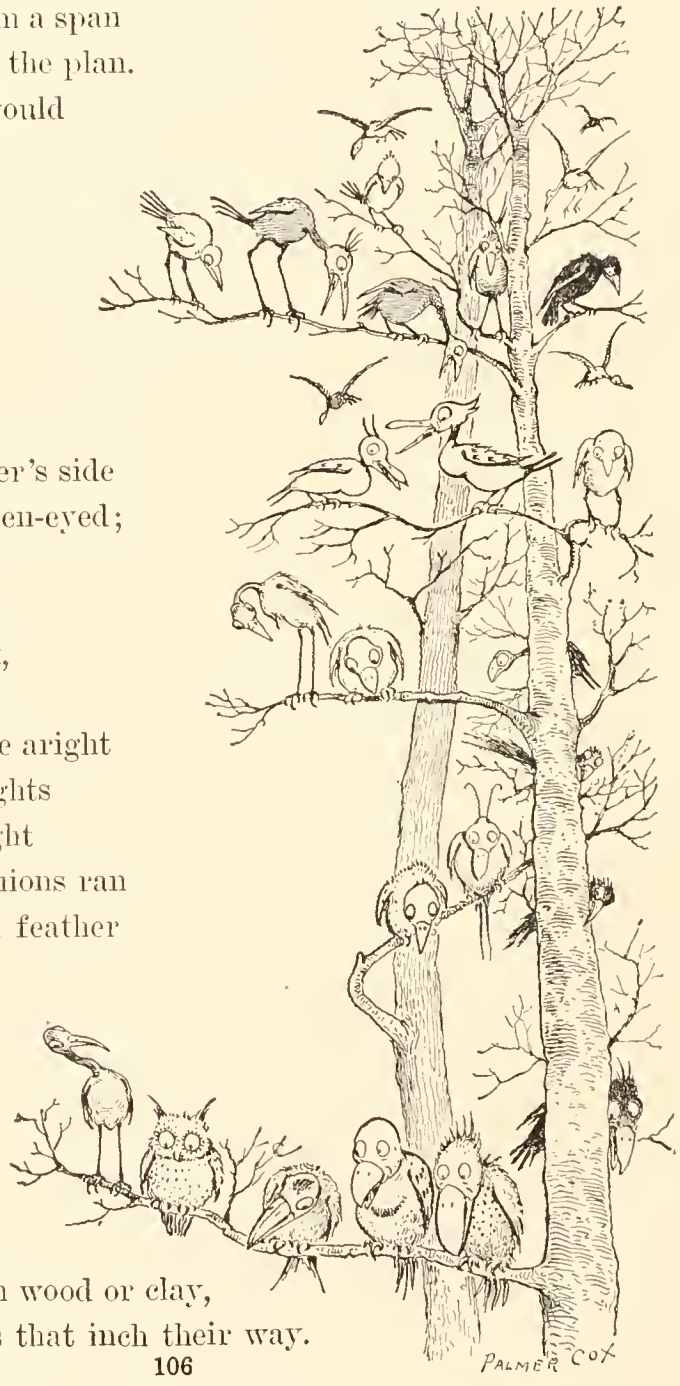


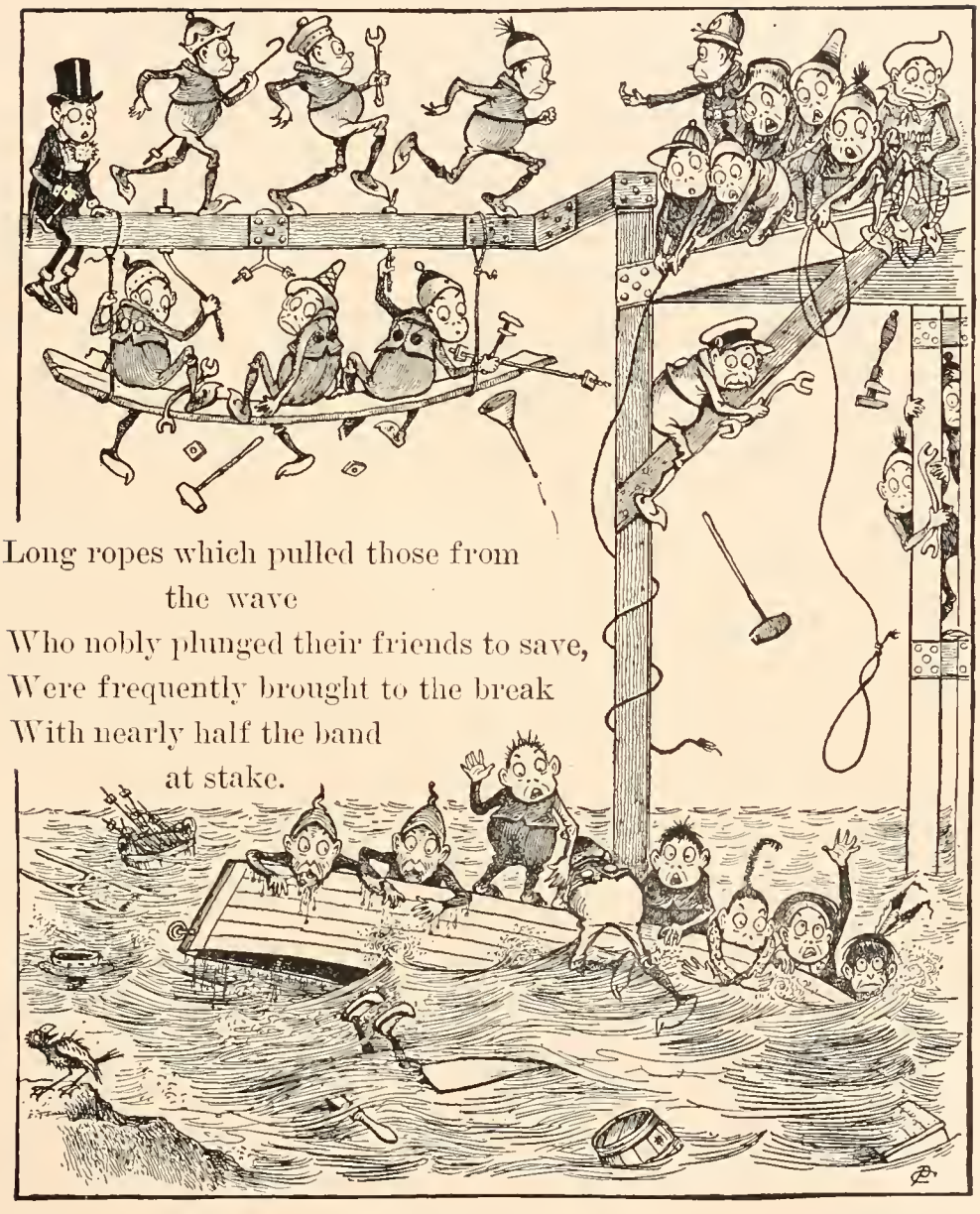
Work on Sunday and you'll gain
Weeks of labor all in vain.



'T was hard to swim against the tide
With heavy pieces trailing wide,

And long enough to form a span
Of great importance in the plan.
At times these pieces would
break loose
And great confusion
would produce—
And none could tell
where ruin ran
Nor where it ended
or began.
The birds along the river's side
Sat on the branches open-eyed;
No sleep brought rest
to beast or bird
That watched the work,
the clamor heard.
If they could talk or we aright
Could read their thoughts
't would give delight
To learn just how opinions ran
Among the furred and feather
clan;
Forgot were corn-
fields, frogs,
and peas,
The mice, and
snakes, and
bumble-bees,
The grubs, and bugs in wood or clay,
And measuring worms that inch their way.





Long ropes which pulled those from
the wave
Who nobly plunged their friends to save,
Were frequently brought to the break
With nearly half the band
at stake.

The boat upset and left the crew
Both drenched and frightened through and through,

The cargo sinking out of sight
But added to their pain and fright.
The work went faster towards the close
And from the chaos order rose.
Old plans were found that showed aright
How certain sections should unite,
And tasks proved easy that before
Upon their time and patience wore.
A barge was brought that played a part
Most sorely needed from the start
And midway out, with anchors down,
Upon their efforts placed the crown,
For work from there was pushed ahead
That to a finish quickly led.



Said one, between the stroke or strain,
To those more given to complain,
"What though we toil, what though we run
To aid mankind till rise of sun?
If blessings come from friendly act
They fit the better through the fact."

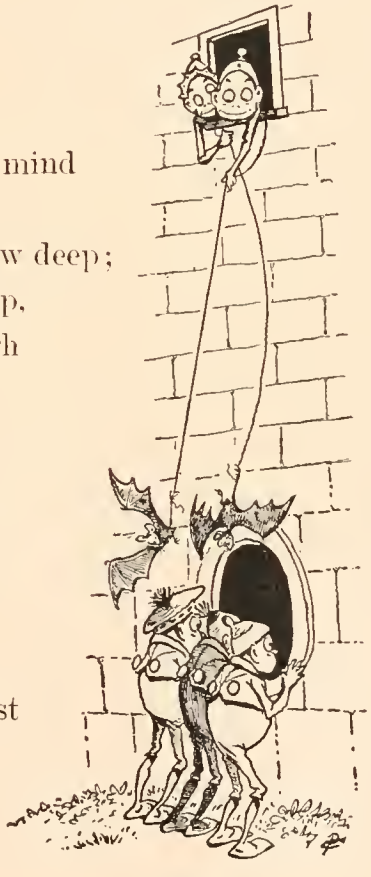




THE BROWNIES FIND WORK FOR THE VETERINARY

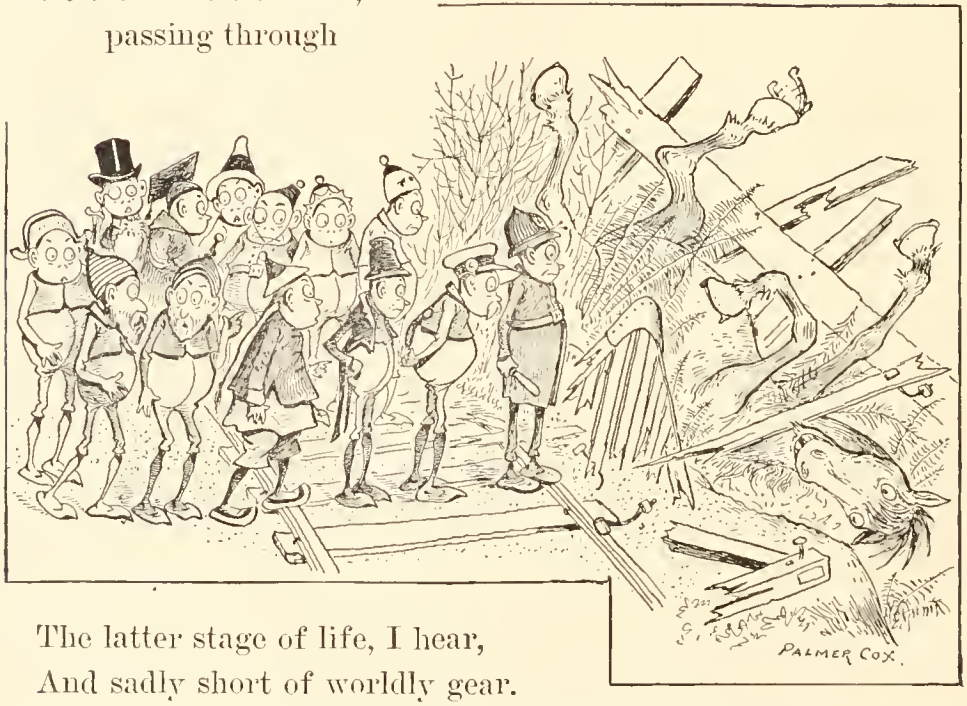


gives a lift or start
To any enterprise or art,
Seems to the Brownie's helpful mind
A chance to benefit mankind.
'T was evening and the shade grew deep;
The watchman on his post, asleep,
Was drowsing, though the fine was high
If he fell under public eye;
The owl was hooting on the bough
To call his mate to notice how
The jolly moon began to spill
Her radiance o'er the distant hill.
When on the scene with faces bright
The Brownies gathered for the night,
They vowed the hours should not be lost
In moping round, at any cost.
Said one, "I noticed here to-day
A cottage where an old horse lay





Beside the road; and it seems plain
She had been injured by a train;
The locomotive from the back
Just grazed her as she crossed the track."
Another said, "I saw the same
When I passed by. She 's more than lame,
And more than liniment she 'll need
To bring her to her former speed.
An aged couple own the cot,
And sore misfortune is their lot.
It rests with us something to do
To aid these old folks,
passing through



The latter stage of life, I hear,
And sadly short of worldly gear.
This broken creature which they own
Is little more than skin and bone—

But still she had the strength to haul
Them to the store or market-stall,
And when the bell on Sabbath day
Called them to church to kneel and pray,
It was a chance they oft improved,
Hoping their cares might be removed.





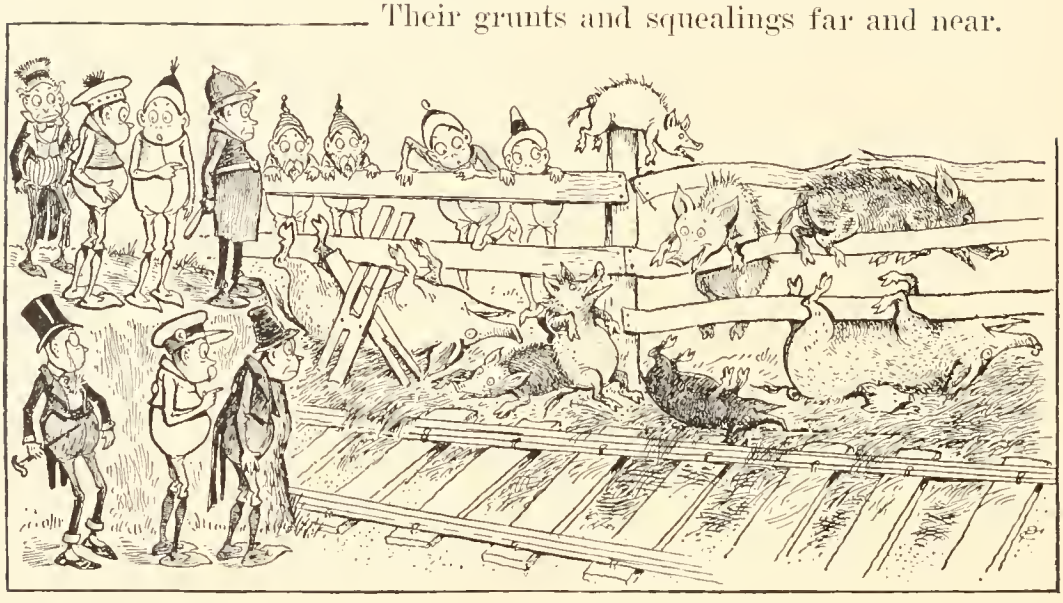
Twin colts, besides,
a nobby pair,
Who at the time were
standing there,



(Without a fault, except a slack
Idea of danger on the track,)
Were injured also by the train,
And suffered many a bruise and strain."

"And that 's not all," another said,
"Some pigs nearby had made their bed
And in the crash, as now is known,
One lost some skin, one broke a bone;
And if the horse has need of care,
The swine no less should get their share;

And if you listen, you can hear
Their grunts and squealings far and near.



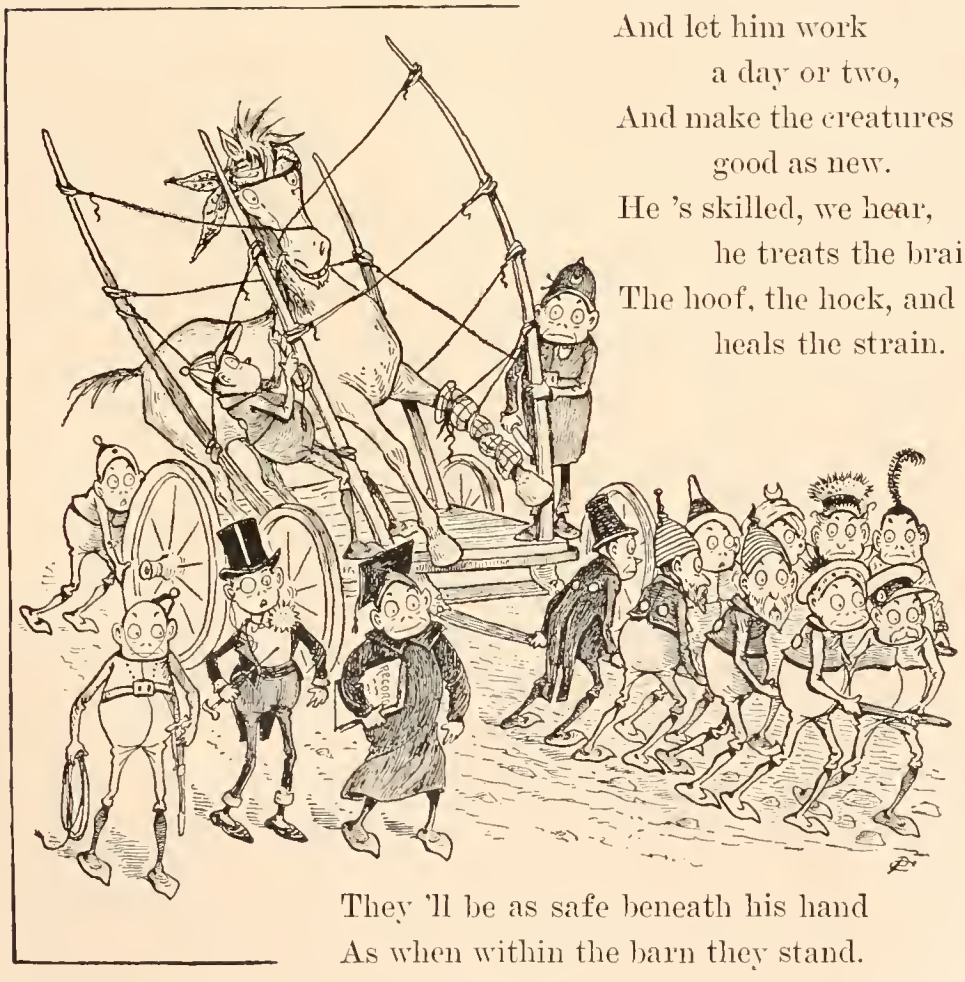
'T is not, we find, a common case,
And plasters seem quite out of place.
Some cuts we may with linen bind,
But more is needed, you will find.
'T is worse than scratches here or there,
Or broken teeth, or loss of hair,
Our magic power we 'll have to give
To help the wounded creatures live.
Some chickens, too, that sat in rows
Upon the fence to seek repose,
Were hit by splinters, till the flock
Were rendered helpless by the shock.
We 'll pick them up and take them down,
As best we can, to yonder town,



Let smiles spread wide
until the frown
Finds no place left to
settle down.

And leave them stationed there before
The veterinary's office-door;





And let him work
a day or two,
And make the creatures
good as new.
He 's skilled, we hear,
he treats the brain,
The hoof, the hock, and
heals the strain.

They 'll be as safe beneath his hand
As when within the barn they stand.

He knows what liniments can do;
And what can start the hair anew;
How to employ the splint, or cast
To overcome the fracture fast;
What applications, thick or thin,
Will start another coat of skin;



Or what will bring the feathers fair
Upon the fowl, though plucked so bare."
By chance a clothes-line, stretching nigh,
Of cotton furnished a supply,



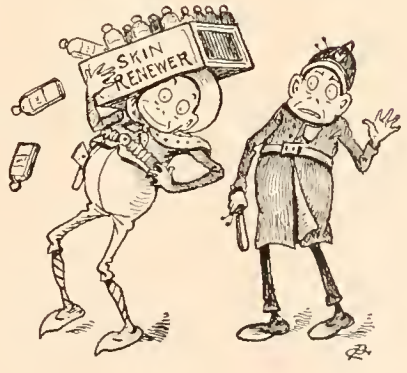
Which served for bandages and slings
As well as could the proper things—
For skill to tie, or tact to wind,
Is not to mortal hands confined.
First aid to injured man or beast
Is knowledge which should be increased,
And Brownies, through their mystic ways,
Give us examples worth our praise.



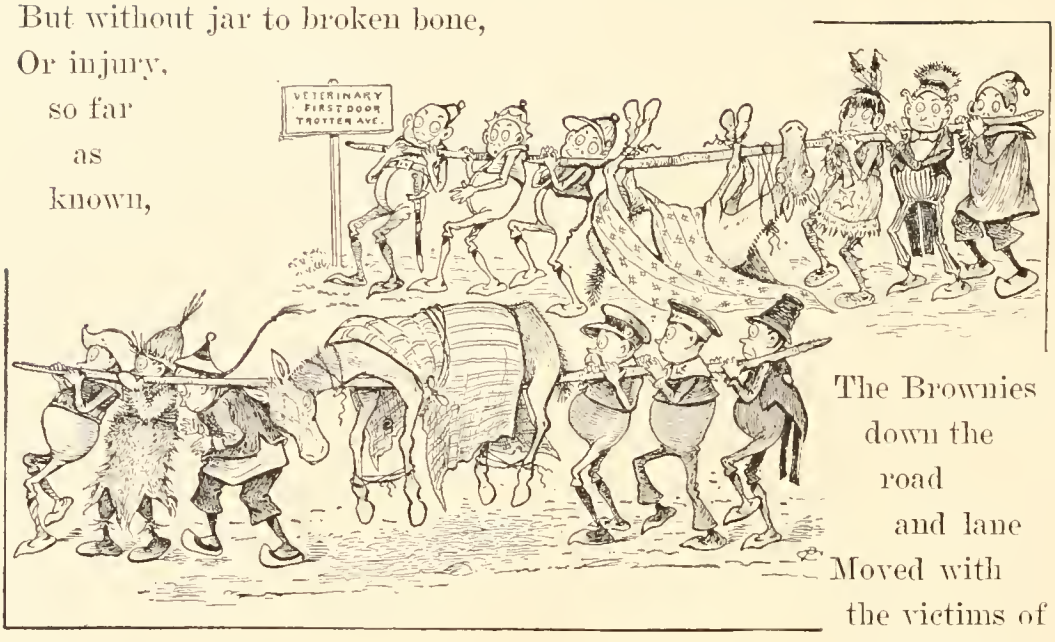


Then from the warehouse and the store
All kinds of remedies they bore,
Sought out the shelves that might contain
The liniments for break or strain,
For loss of hair, and loss of hide,
And plumage scattered far and wide.
They took from those who could afford
It best, supplies that had been stored—
For greatest good in greatest need
Is part and parcel of their creed.

They handled all with heed, but still
Mishaps occurred, as oft they will.
For bottles, brittle at the best,
Discharged themselves without request,
And spread the liquid in demand
Without the help of screw or hand.
To move the caravan with care
Was work that gave each one
his share;



But without jar to broken bone,
Or injury,
so far
as
known,



The Brownies
down the
road
and lane
Moved with
the victims of
the train;

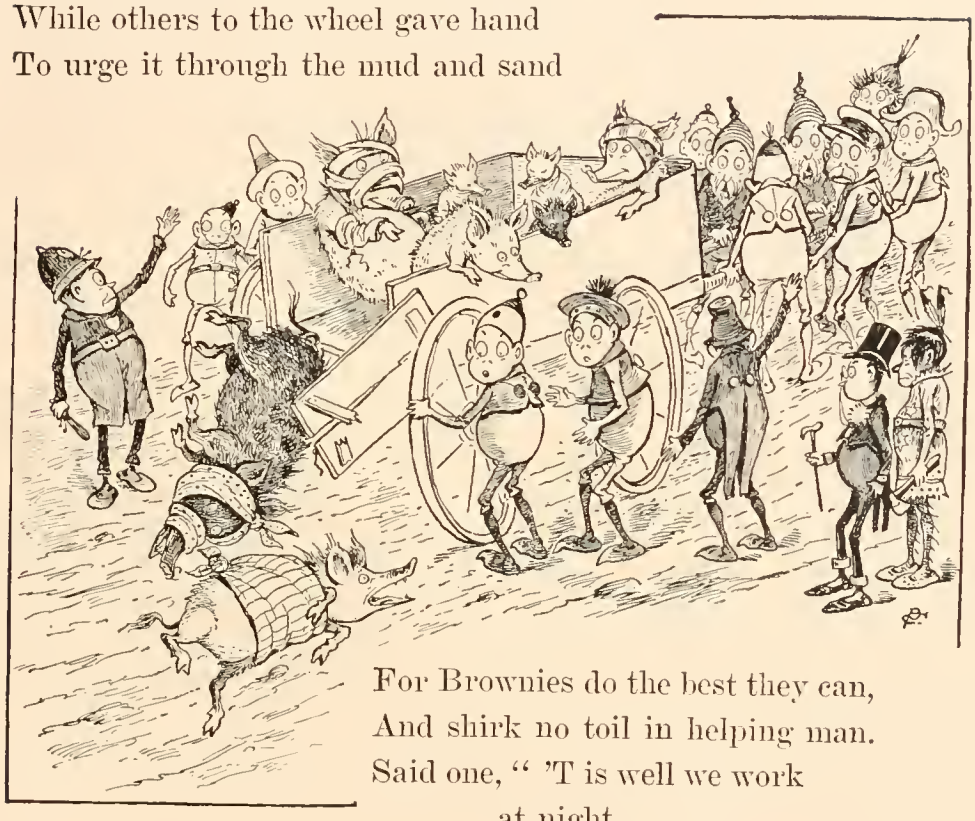
They 're not above the humblest deeds
They think the situation needs;
One mind in all, one purpose strong,
To all lend aid, to none do wrong.
And nothing in the field or fold
They turn from with indifference cold.
The burden may be great, indeed.



It often is, as
one can read,
But that 's a matter
counted
slight
By such strange
elves as
Brownies bright.

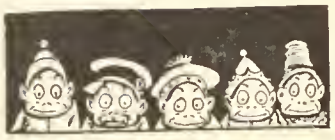


Between the shafts some took their place
And buckled fast the strap, or trace;
While others to the wheel gave hand
To urge it through the mud and sand



For Brownies do the best they can,
And shirk no toil in helping man.
Said one, " 'T is well we work
at night,
For this would be a sorry sight
For nervous people, coming out
Of doctor's offices about—
The shock would surely give them pain,
Or aching head, or dizzy brain,
And all the treatment and advice
Would go for nothing in a trice;
But we have nerves that do not shake
With sights at which the others quake,





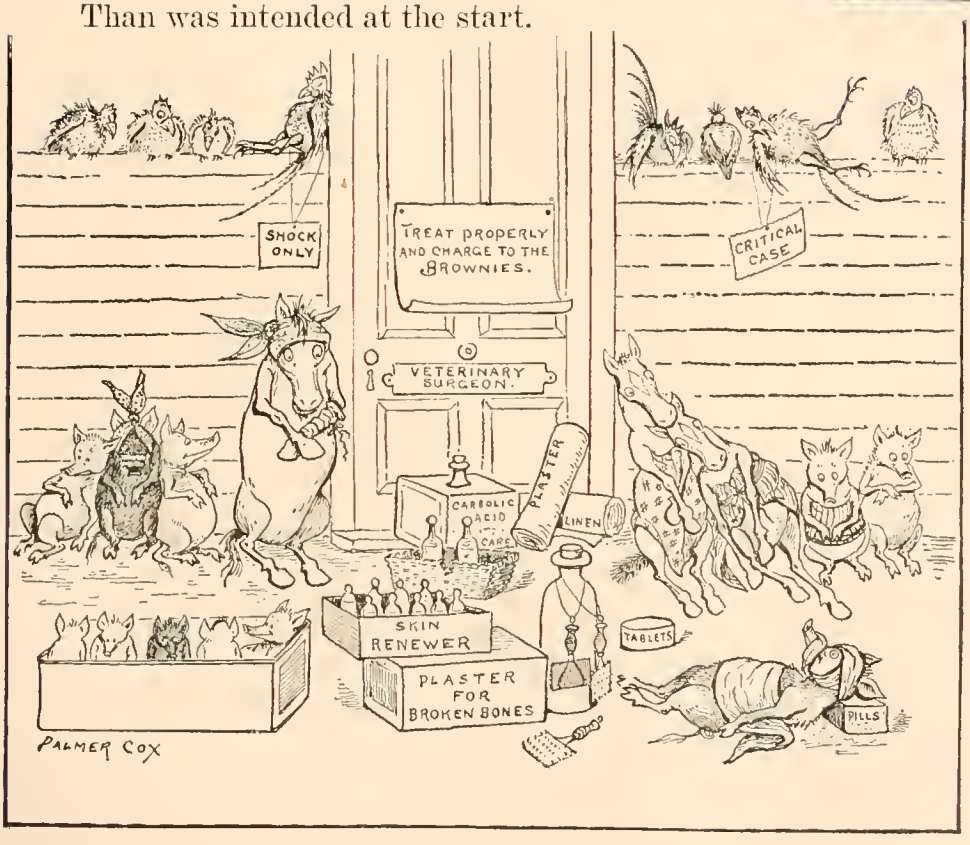
And will not let our senses go
Because of an unsightly show.
Distress, wherever it is found,
Will spread no pleasing halo round,
But we must do our part the same
Or else forego the Brownie name."
One trip did not suffice to bring
The splintered bone or injured wing
Of wretched creatures who had found
A railroad bed was dangerous ground,
And so repeated trips were made
Between the village and the grade,
Where rushing wheels disturbed the sleep
Of beast and bird with rapid sweep.
But scant respect the creatures paid,
And showed resistance to their aid,
For though intentions were the best
That could inspire an elfin breast
The creatures never had been taught
The finer lines of human thought,
And saw injustice sharp and full
In every bandage, push and pull.
And some, in fact, were strong of head,
Could not be coaxed, would not be led
But took each touch or tumble there
As something not upon the square.



'Twas well they fell in Brownie hands
At such a time, when such demands
Were made on patience, skill and care
And kind forbearance everywhere.

And seldom through the roughest deal
Was there occasion for a squeal,
Though bruised of leg, or sore of hide
The petting methods were denied
When beasts ran counter to their aim
And thus incurred the weight of blame.
And Brownies played a sterner part
Than was intended at the start.





When Brownies move to work we find
They have a finish in their mind,
And vain is every kick and shift
Against a supernatural gift.



The Brownies could not stay in town,
After they brought the creatures down;
They could not wait about, to see
What was the cure or remedy;
For soon the arrows of the sun
Forced elfin-folk to break and run.
But when the doctor next stepped out,
And saw the creatures ranged about,
Both old and young, too weak to stand,
And waiting for his skillful hand,
He picked his steps among the maimed,
With drugs, that close attention claimed,
From drops to brace the sinking heart
To those that give the hair a start,
And cried, "This is no common call.
The Brownie rogues have done it all!"

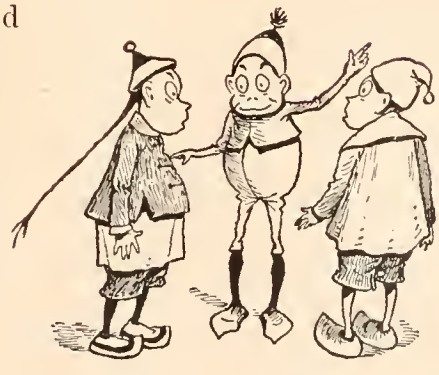




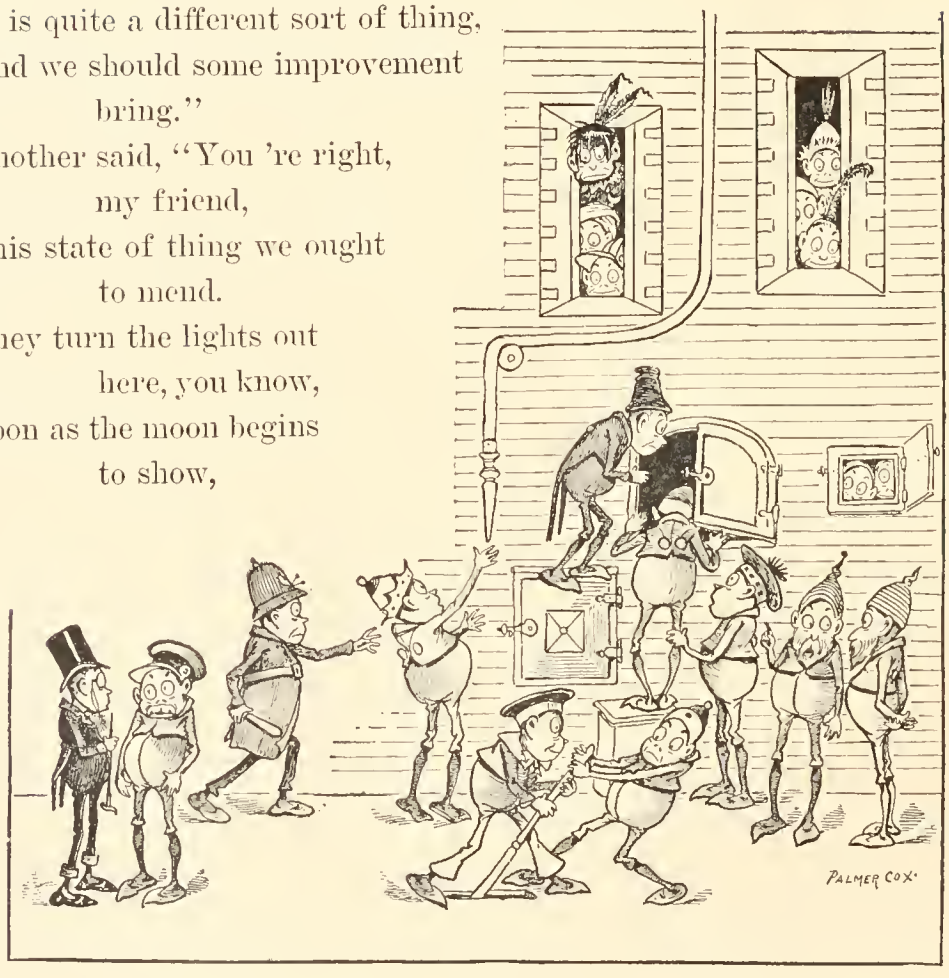


THE BROWNIES AND THE ELECTRIC LIGHT PLANT

THE TOWN'S electric plant was bad,
'T was even worse, and made one sad
To think upon the dark and gloom
That nightly made the streets a tomb.
The bumps from trees and hitching posts,
That in the darkness loomed like ghosts,
Made people to their homes retreat,
Or with a lantern take the street.
When Brownies paused to look around
Upon this dark suburban ground,
Said one, "It matters not to us
That streets are badly lighted thus;
We 're like the beetle, bat,
and owl,
When sun goes down, and
creatures prowl,

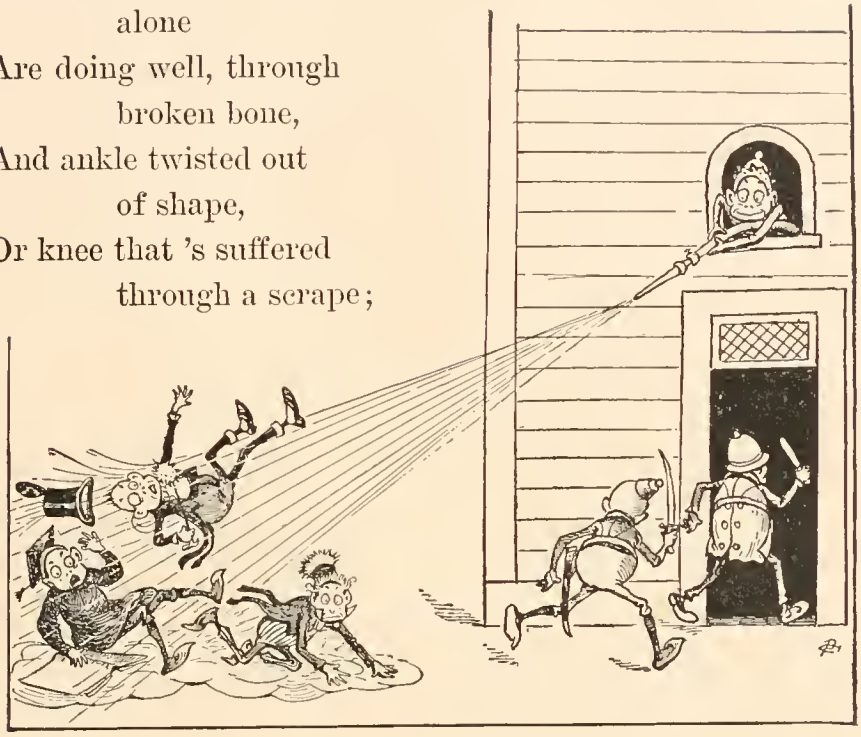


And night's black veil drops to its place
To hide the smiles on nature's face.
But to the folk who must obey
A call to bedside, or to pay
A friendly visit at the gate,
Or catch a train that will not wait,
'T is quite a different sort of thing,
And we should some improvement
bring."
Another said, "You 're right,
my friend,
This state of thing we ought
to mend.
They turn the lights out
here, you know,
Soon as the moon begins
to show,



And through the month thus try to keep
Expenses down, and profit reap.

The doctors of the town
alone
Are doing well, through
broken bone,
And ankle twisted out
of shape,
Or knee that 's suffered
through a scrape;

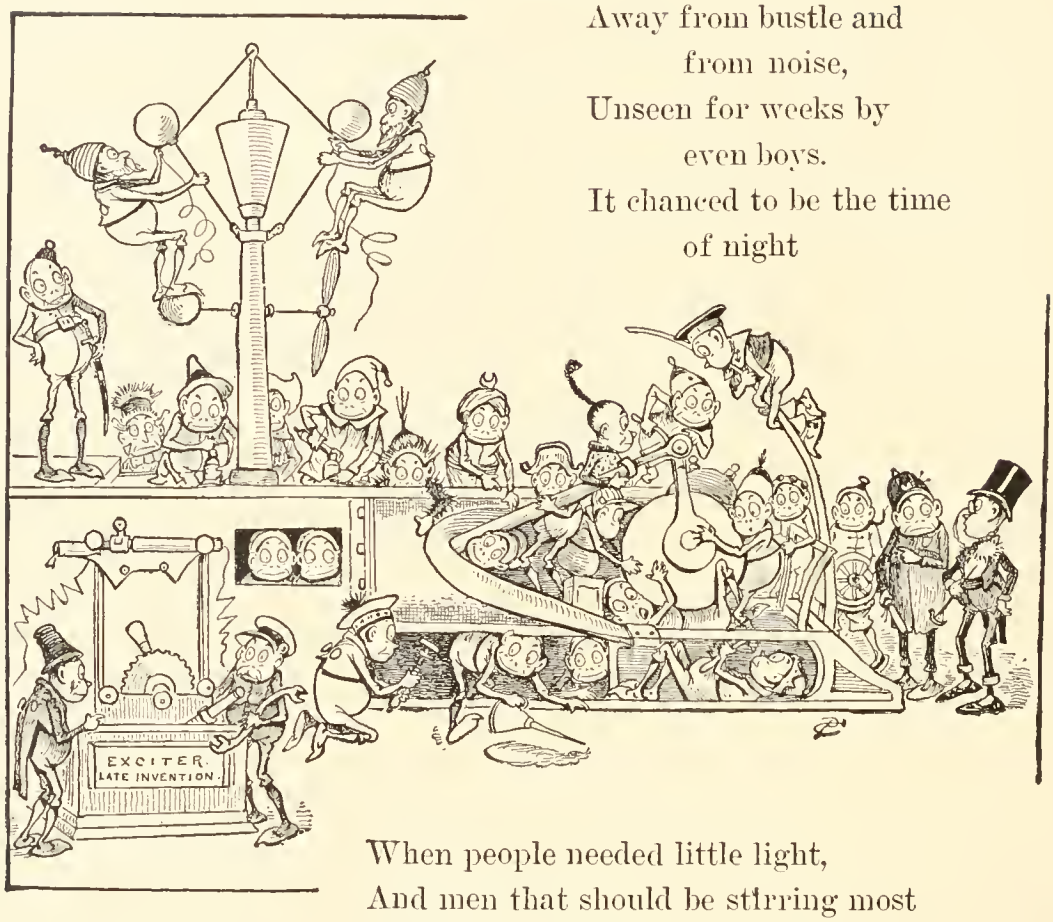


It is a common sight to see
The surgeons treating two or three,
Or four of those who badly fare
When crossing bridge or street or square."

"Well, knowing this, our duty's plain,"
A third remarked. "At once we 'll gain
An entrance to the plant below
From which they draw this fitful glow,
And learn what changes should be made—
There 's much to do, I am afraid."
They found the plant down in a nest
Beside a stream, and small at best,



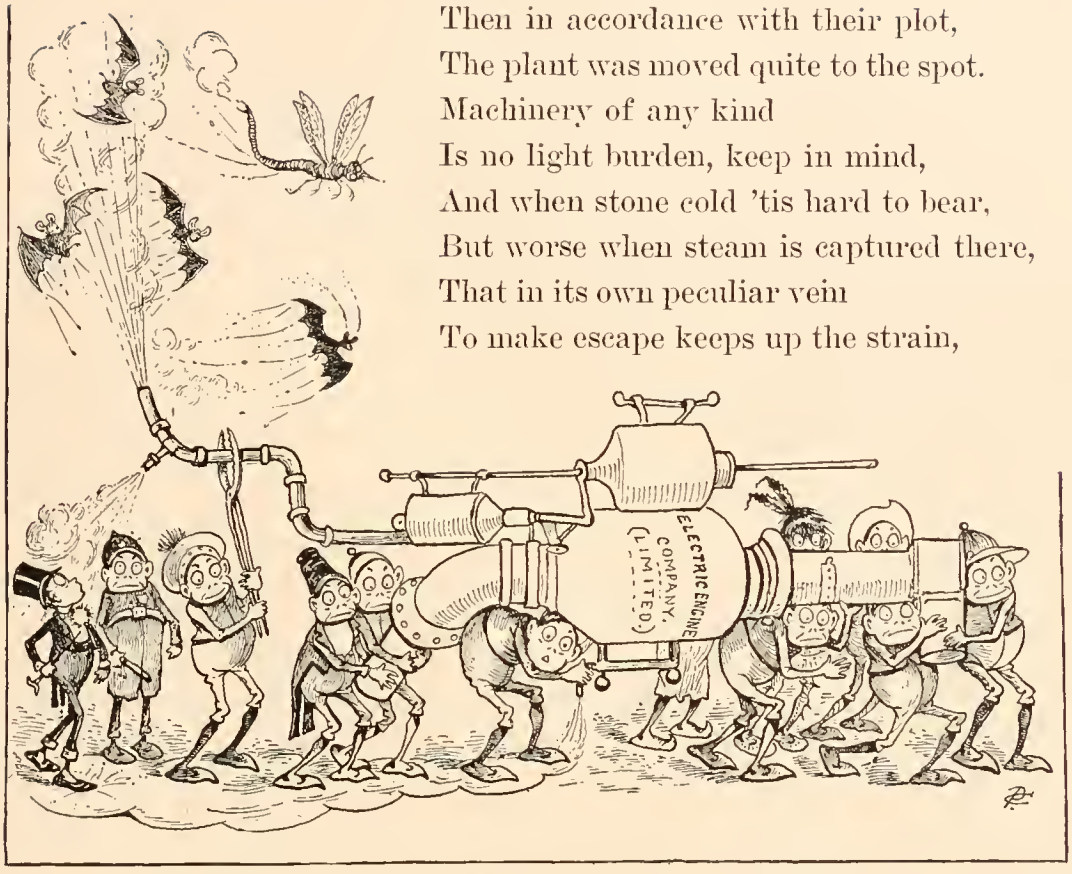
The planet here that
hides its head
In its own orbit cuts
a spread.



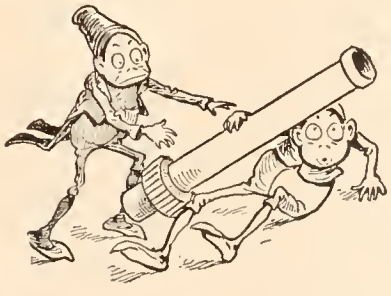
Away from bustle and
from noise,
Unseen for weeks by
even boys.
It chanced to be the time
of night
When people needed little light,
And men that should be stirring most
Were not that moment at their post,
Which served the Brownies' purpose well—
But I must tell you what befell!
Said one, "We 'll move the whole affair
And plant it in the village square,
Where citizens can step aside
And look upon the plant with pride;
While when the work 's completed right
The town will have a better light."

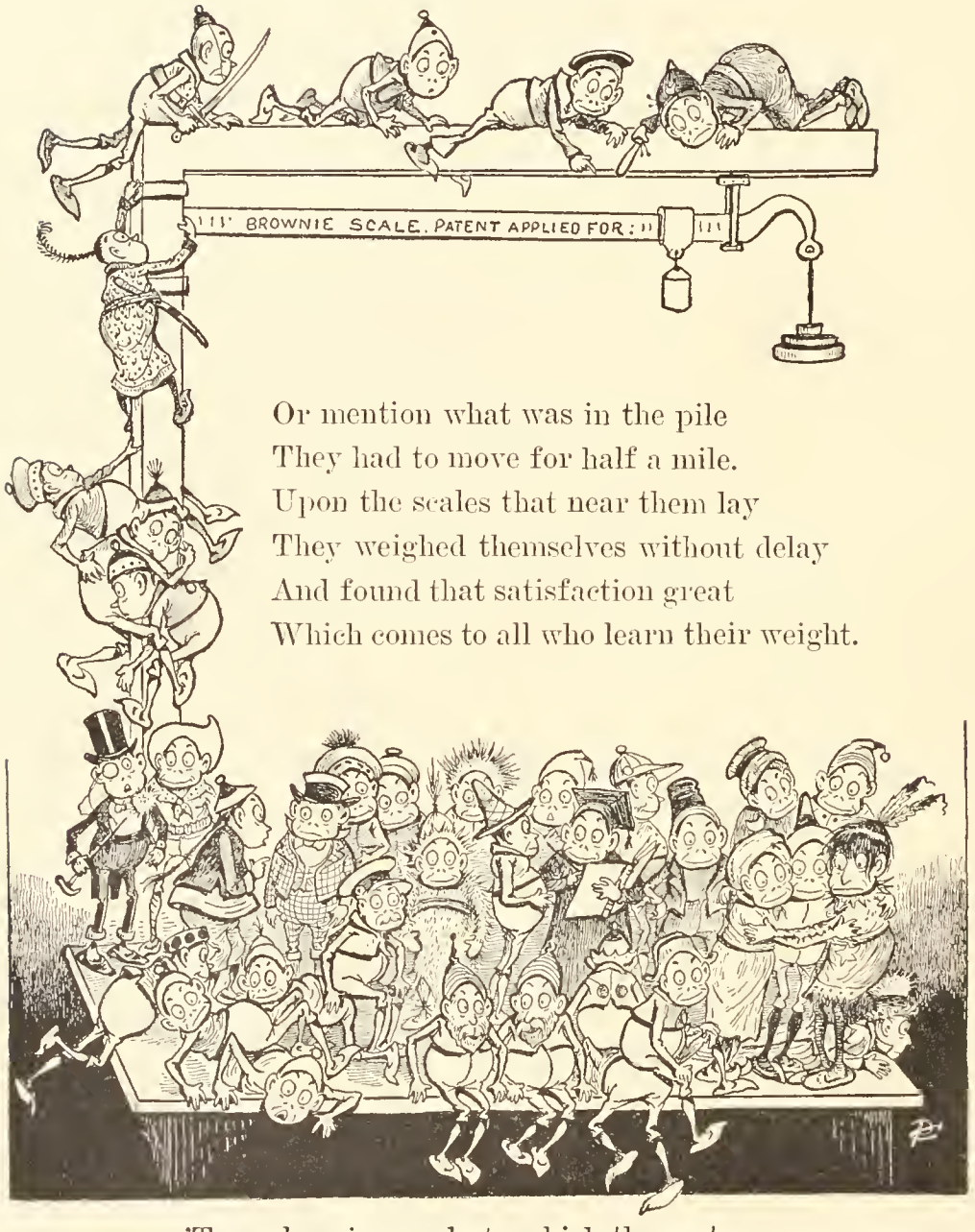


Then in accordance with their plot,
The plant was moved quite to the spot.
Machinery of any kind
Is no light burden, keep in mind,
And when stone cold 'tis hard to bear,
But worse when steam is captured there,
That in its own peculiar vein
To make escape keeps up the strain,



And, if they had not mystic power,
Some parts would at this
very hour
Be lying near the former
place
Instead of in the chosen
space.
We cannot stop at such
a time
To add more reason to the rhyme,

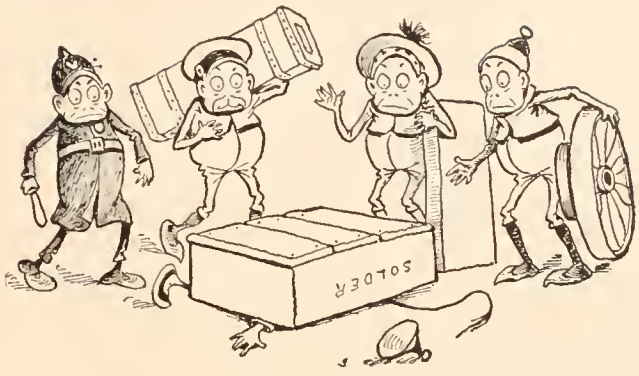




Or mention what was in the pile
They had to move for half a mile.
Upon the scales that near them lay
They weighed themselves without delay
And found that satisfaction great
Which comes to all who learn their weight.

'T was heavier work, to which they set
Their hands that night, than they had met

In months of
rambling, high
or low,
To render aid
where it
should go.
With brass, and steel,
and iron, mixed
'T was not a matter
lightly fixed;





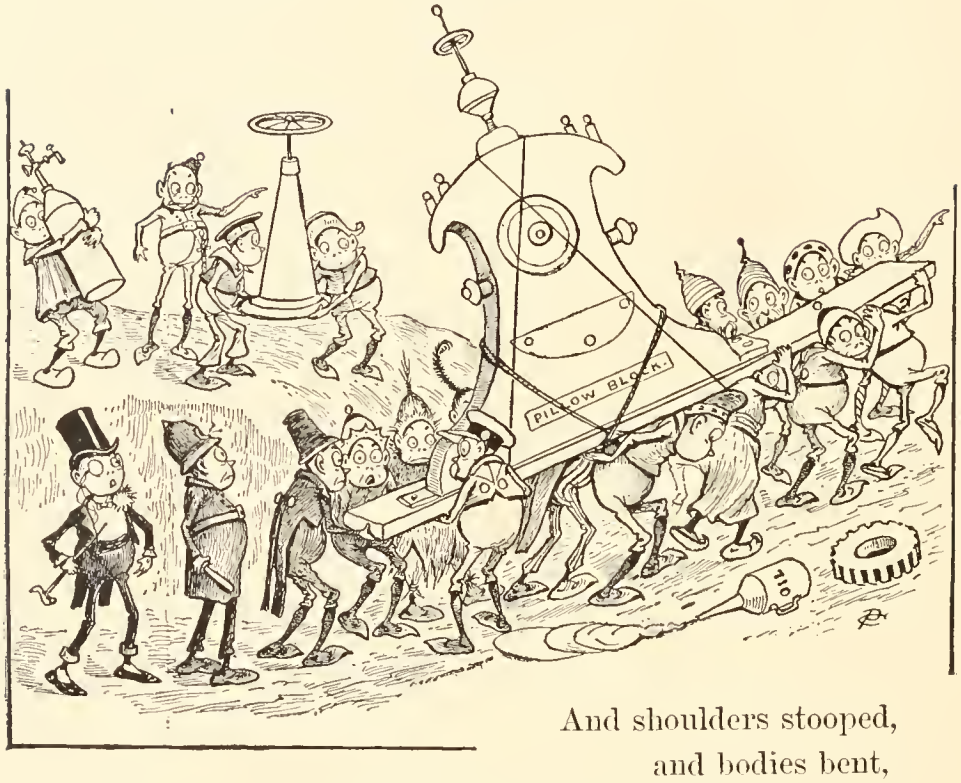
Few things they
found that one
could bear,
And half a dozen
took their
share,
Around the heavy
burdens
bent,



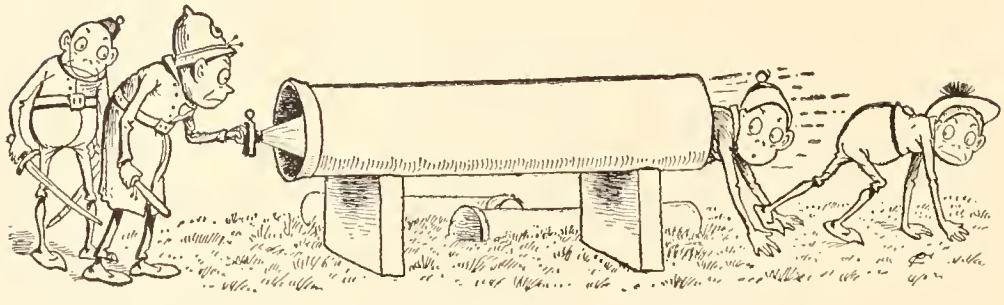
Before they smoothly
onward went.
To injure neither
foot nor hand,
Nor spread confusion
through the band,
Required their supernatural
gift,
The strength to pull,
the brawn to lift.



The pillow block was not a weight
To carry at a lively gait,



And shoulders stooped,
and bodies bent,
And all the band were tired and spent.
Had people been out over-late
And met them in their active state







I know not what they would
have done—
Perhaps they 'd run and run
and run!
But if they had not second sight
They could not see a single sprite,
For Brownies may be there in rows,
Or working at one's very nose,
And if the gift is not your own
You simply move about alone.
A building, serving well their need,
That vacant stood was found with speed;
And there the plant took form once more
With all its parts as heretofore.
To plant machinery in place
Takes sense and skill in every case,
The wheels must true and level lie,
The belt around the pulley fly,



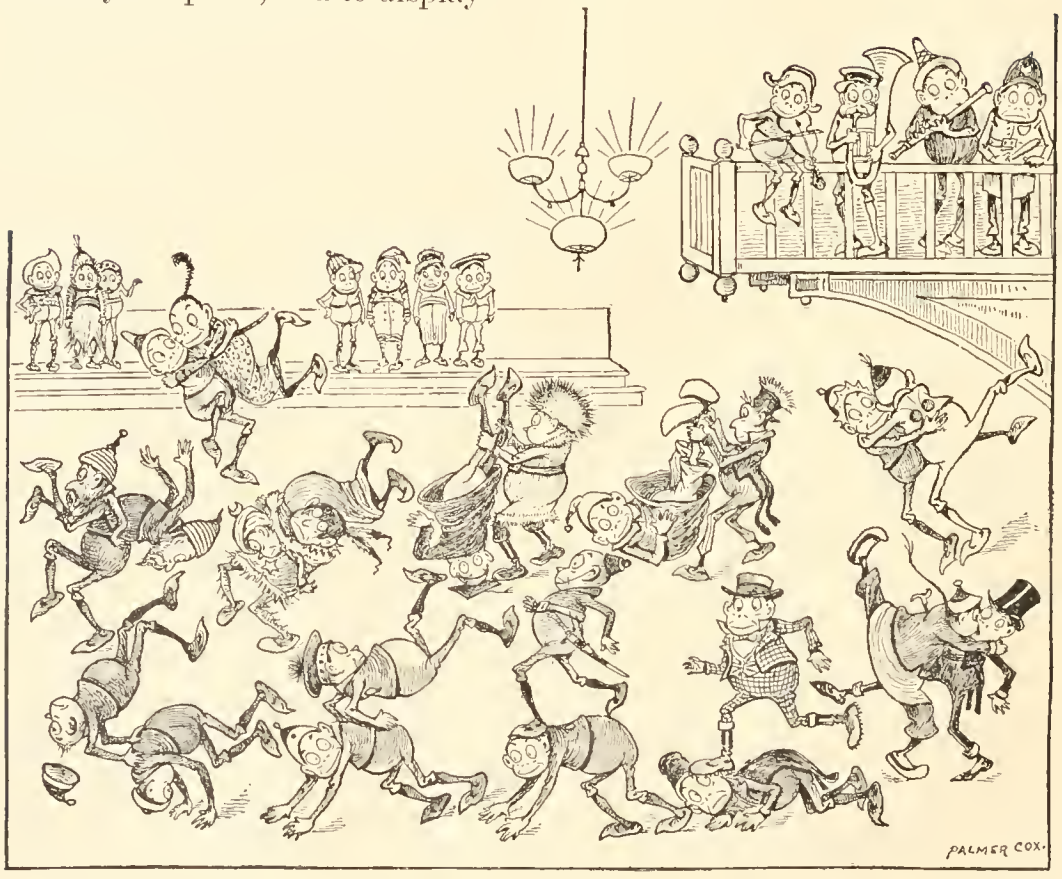
'T is good indeed to
bend the knee,
But let the hands and
head agree.



A Ride on the belt.

And keep its place upon the shaft
Or there 'll be trouble fore and aft.
Long before day, for Brownies' powers
Seemed doubled with the passing hours,

The plant was ready for the touch
Of those who understood how much
To pull the lever, and improve
Their chance to see things quickly move.
Before they took their homeward way,
To try the plant, and to display



The light in streets and lecture halls
And rooms designed for fairs and balls,
They had so excellent a chance
Some practised at the latest dance;

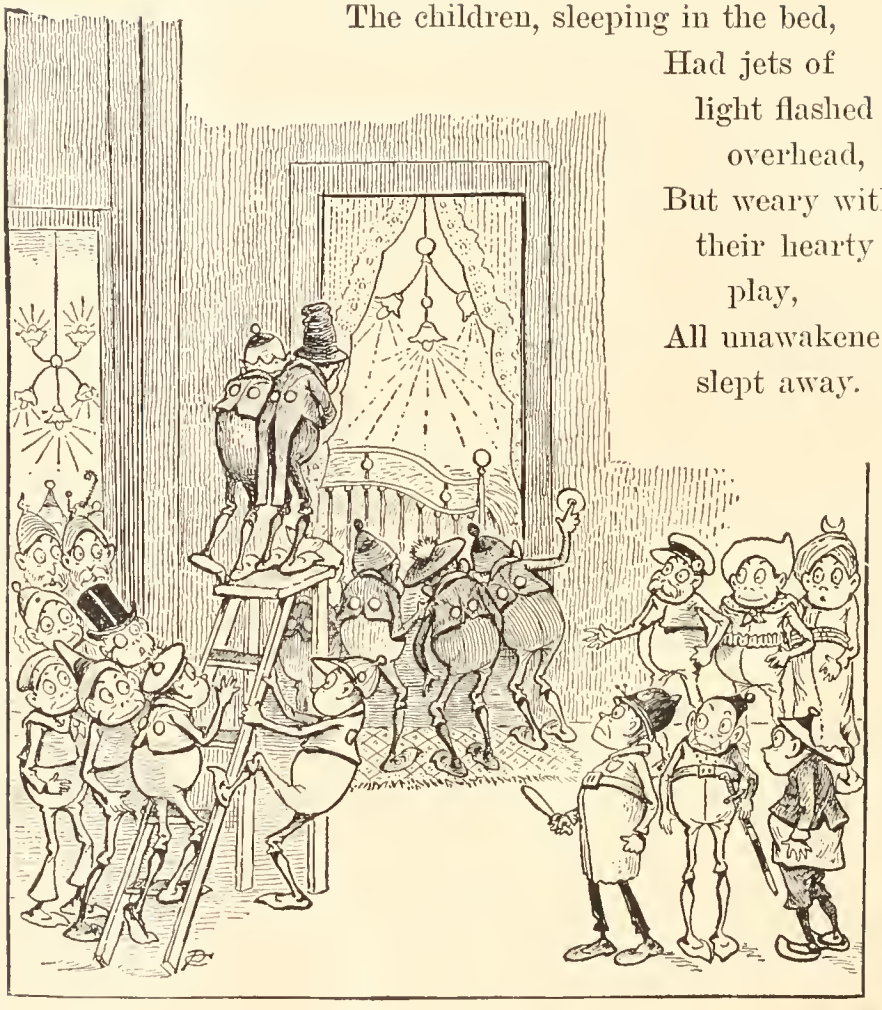
In churches old they tried
the light
At darkest watches of
the night,



Where one from lessons on the page
Gave out some truths for youth and age;
And others laughter did create
By promptly passing round the plate.



But little change the Brownies bear
About their clothes, to church or fair,
And empty platters brought no haul
For Foreign Fund, or local call.

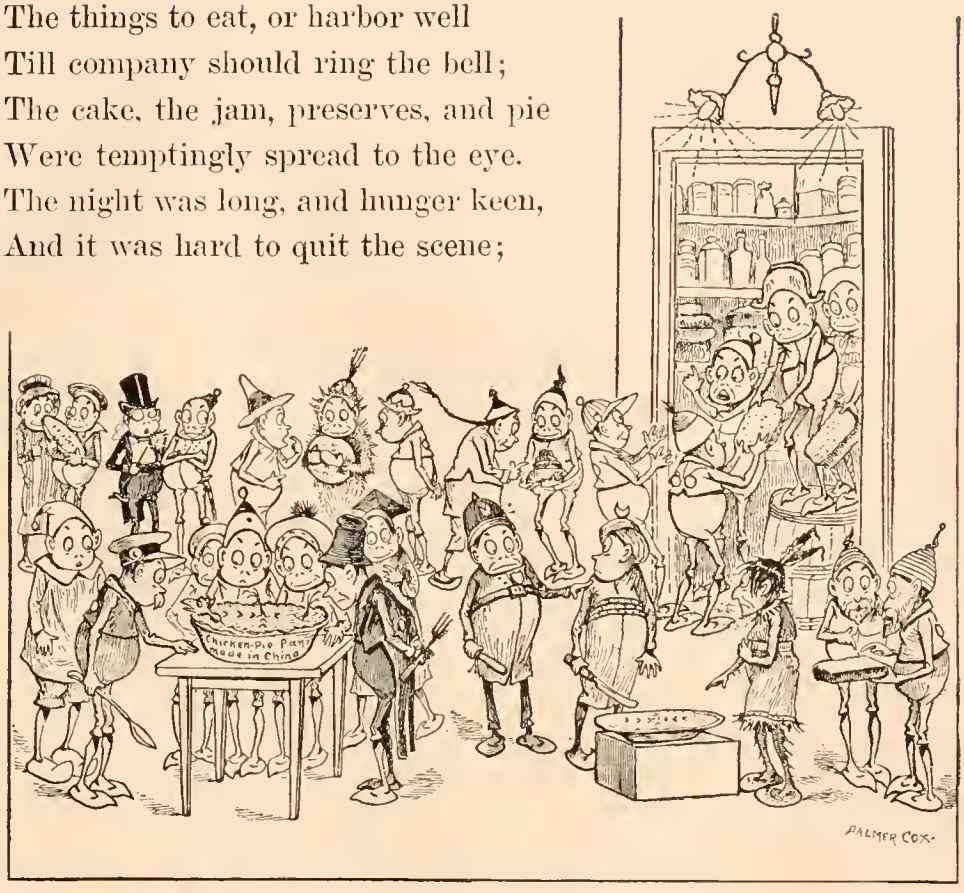


The children, sleeping in the bed,
Had jets of
light flashed
overhead,
But weary with
their hearty
play,
All unawakened,
slept away.

The cellar stairs and
way to roof,
Of perfect work gave
dazzling proof,
And in the pantry, all
the shelves
Showed brightly to the
hungry elves



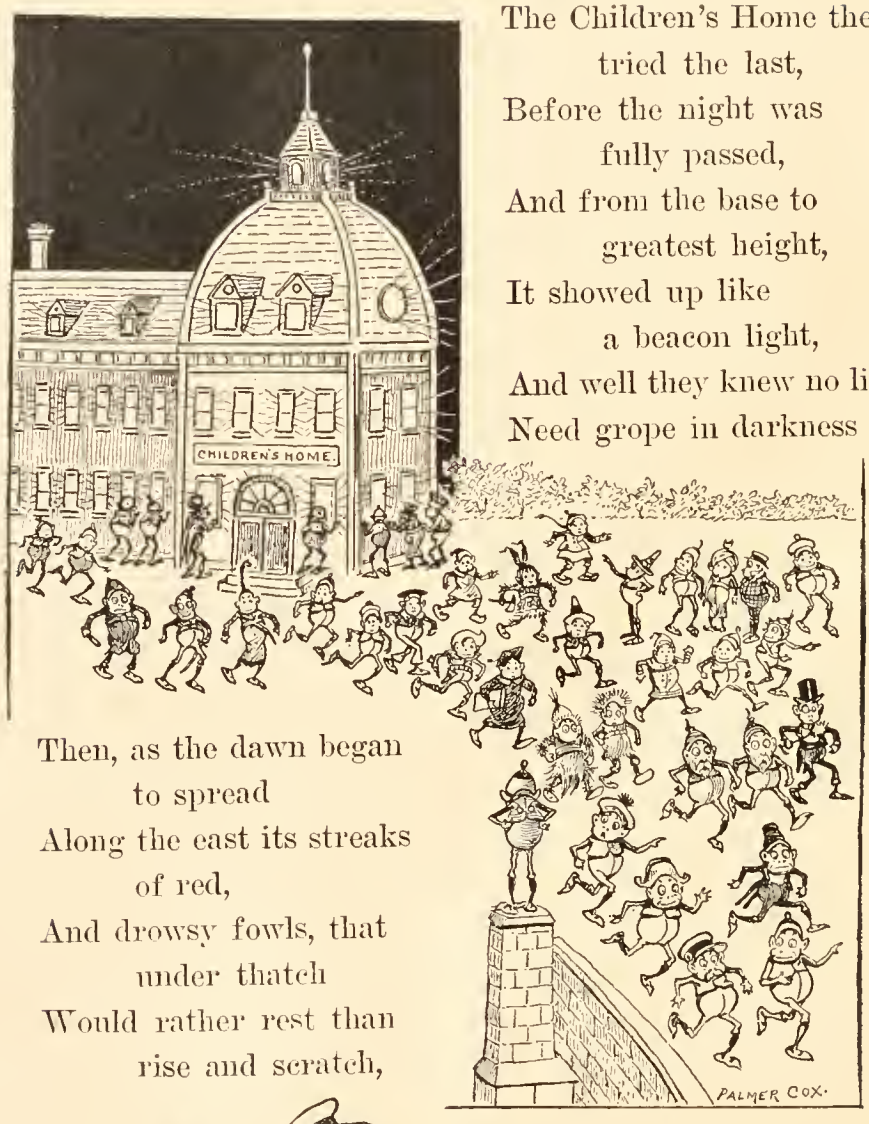
The things to eat, or harbor well
Till company should ring the bell;
The cake, the jam, preserves, and pie
Were temptingly spread to the eye.
The night was long, and hunger keen,
And it was hard to quit the scene;





Men wield a sword to
save a king,
And after from a gal-
lows swing.

Sometimes, temptations prove too strong
For those who wish to do no wrong,
And even Brownies sometimes yield
When richest dainties are revealed;
But though they looked at pie and cake,
And criticised the size and make,
And talked of jelly, jam and tart
And cooking as a vital art,
They broke no crust, and crumbed no floor,
But left things as they were before.



The Children's Home they
tried the last,
Before the night was
fully passed,
And from the base to
greatest height,
It showed up like
a beacon light,
And well they knew no little tot
Need grope in darkness to its cot.

Then, as the dawn began
to spread
Along the east its streaks
of red,
And drowsy fowls, that
under thatch
Would rather rest than
rise and scratch,



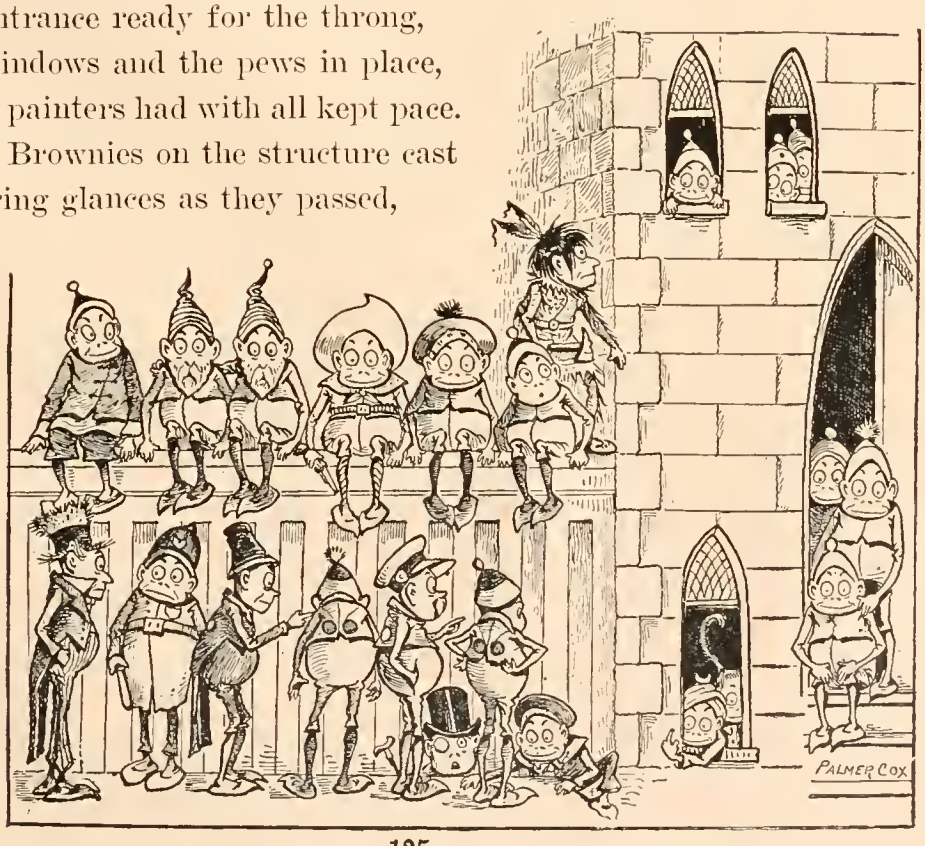
And nearby roosters, wakeful long,
Were crowing lustily and strong,
The Brownies with a cautious mind
Soon left the waking town behind.





THE BROWNIES' CHRISTMAS BELLS

THE CHURCH was built, or nearly so,
In styles of churches long ago.
Upon the hill it stood alone,
The walls were laid of brick and stone,
The roof aslant with rafters long,
The entrance ready for the throng,
The windows and the pews in place,
While painters had with all kept pace.
When Brownies on the structure cast
Inquiring glances as they passed,



Said one: "Though all seems done below
There 's something lacking, as we know,
For in that belfry on the crest
No bell as yet has found a rest."
Another said: "As Christmas Day
Is nigh at hand, we 'll quit our play
And do our part with Brownie zeal,
So bells may ring their merry peal.
A foundry near with some in store
Will be the place we 'll now explore,



The pistol pops, and who must die?
The hapless stranger passing by.

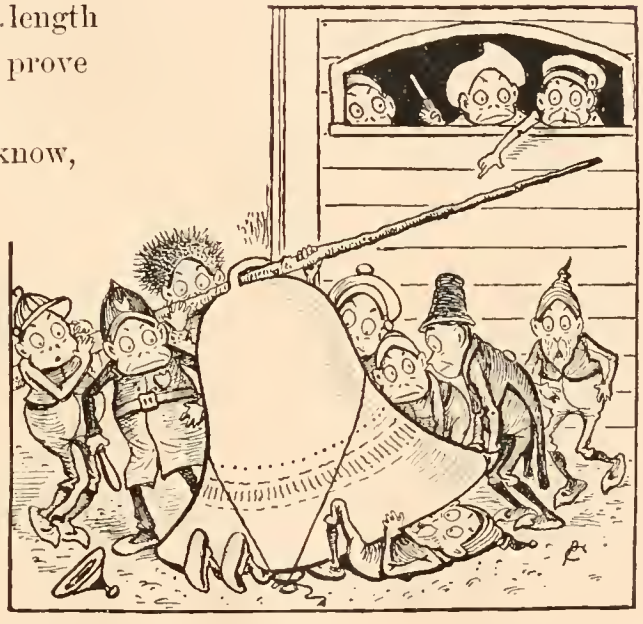


And when the midnight comes about
Our chimes will ring a welcome out."
The foundry sure enough was found
Where brazen bells were standing round;
Some just from moulds, both large and small,
More fixed with clapper, crank and all,
And ready for their final home
In humble spire or shining dome.
By halves the Brownies nothing do,
They work with zest and carry through
The plans complete they have in sight,
However short may be the night.
And now, although one sounding bell
Could summon all the people well,
A perfect chime of sweetest tone
Would satisfy the band alone.

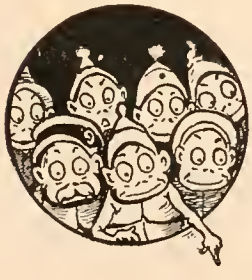




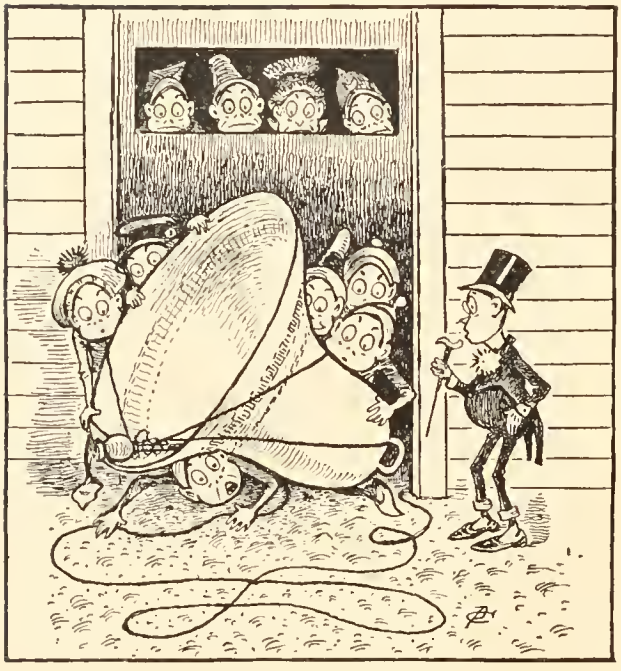
Those knowing best the
Brownie way
Will not be doubting,
when we say
Some bells were from
the foundry rolled
Before the metal quite
was cold,



Or carried off on poles of length
Where many sprites could prove
their strength
In such a hurry, one may know,
There were surprises,
high and low;
And Brownies, who to
help essayed,
Were more a hindrance
than an aid.
Across the bridge, and
past the mill,
To reach the church
upon the hill
They made their way with stoop and crawl,
And painful stumble, too, and fall.



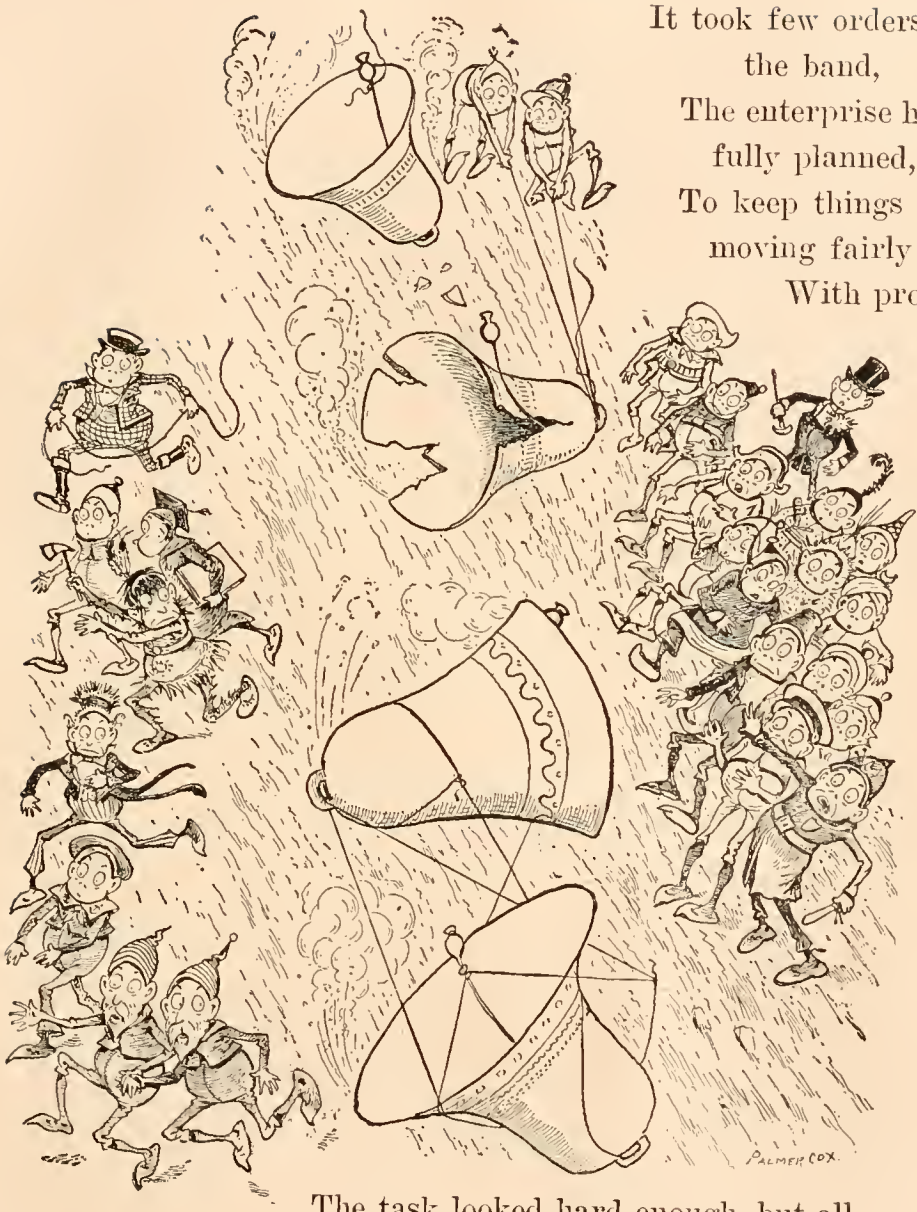
The bells were muffled with all care,
So not a sound broke on the air,
As through the town the cunning band
Proceeded with the work in hand.
At times, in spite of every art,
A steep decline would give a start;



They feared the bells
downhill would roll
If of their loads
they lost control.
And it was well the
Brownies' speed
Was equal to their
pressing need,
Though wild the whirl
and steep the hill,
They kept their wits
about them still,
And shouted loud to
clear the way,
For started once, they
could not stay.

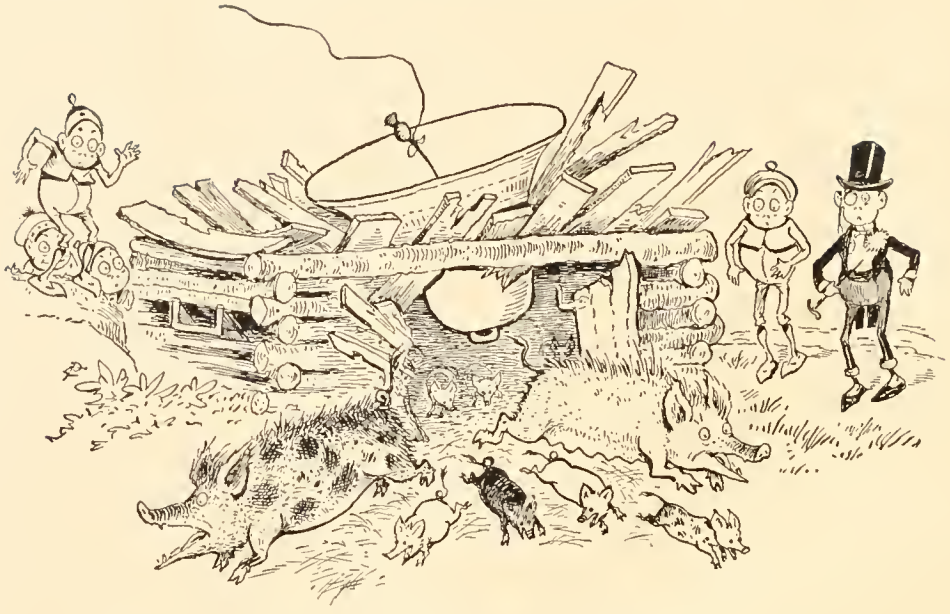
One must see Brownies in a plight
To understand their nature right,
And note how skillfully is laid
The plan, that all may render aid.
To reach the
building brought
a strain,
That proved the
nerves as well
as brain;
For hasty action
tries the best,
No matter of
what strength possessed.





It took few orders, for
the band,
The enterprise had
fully planned,
To keep things
moving fairly fast
With promise of
success
at
last.

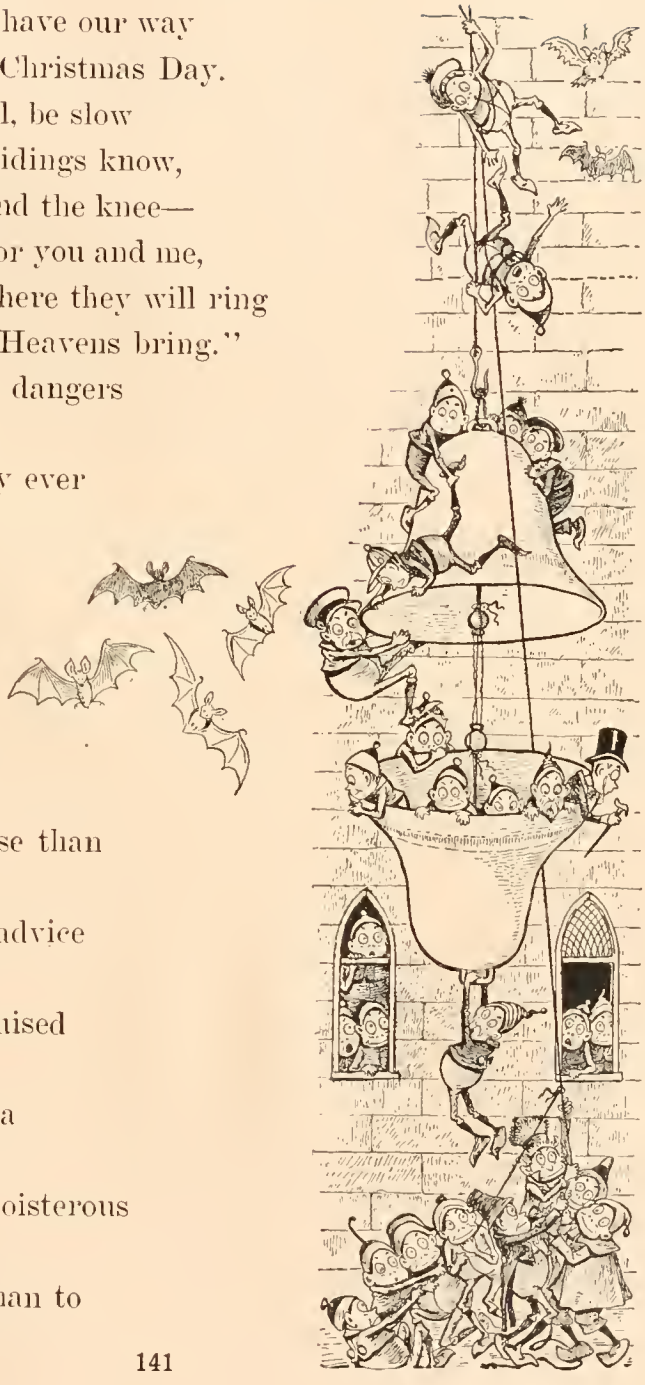
The task looked hard enough, but all
Their burdens carried to the wall.
But that seemed play, when they began,
With rope and chains that upward ran



To hoist the bells by pull and pry
To stations in the belfry high.
Said one: "We 've gone too far, I fear,
To risk our necks on timbers here,
To put a bunch of bells in place
To please the thankless human race,
Who oft are slow to do
their share—
Though others toil,
they do not
care."
Another said:
"Be slow to
scold,
Or criticise, but
keep your hold.



Within an hour we 'll have our way
And welcome ring to Christmas Day.
Let people, if they will, be slow
To hear the call, the tidings know,
Or quite neglect to bend the knee—
The task 's the same for you and me,
To place these bells where they will ring
And echoes from the Heavens bring."
Then dangers low and dangers
high
Were in their pathway ever
nigh,
For some were
quick the ropes
to strain,
While more were
slow their place
to gain,
And could do little else than
cling
And take what cheer advice
could bring.
The sailor who has cruised
around,
For forty years the sea
and sound,
Will calmly face the boisterous
air
That sends the landsman to
his prayer.



Thus sprites that many
dangers meet
Are somewhat
slow to own
defeat.
So one by one,
through mystic
sleight,
The bells were
hoisted to the height



Where far above foundation stones
They blended their melodious tones.
It took some knowledge of the stroke
To shun the dirge for burying folk,
And ring glad peals to wake the earth,
And call to mind the Glorious Birth.
In ways peculiar to the band
They rang the bells with willing hand.
In fact it caused no little smart
That all could not at this take part,
For every hand was itching there
A portion of the task to bear,



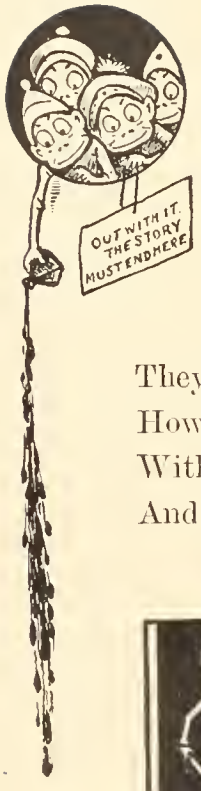
But those must toll who knew the rules,
Set by ecclesiastic schools,
And as the clock proclaimed the time,
From out the belfry pealed a chime
That made the sleeper lift his head
And leap in wonder from the bed.
Not till that night, o'er valley wide,
Or up the wooded mountainside,

Was such a pleasing story told
To charm the ear of young and old.
Amazement spread, still rising higher,
As joyous notes broke from the spire,
And trembled on the midnight clear
That happy tidings all must hear.
It meant not war, with striving fraught,
Too sweet the sound for such a thought.

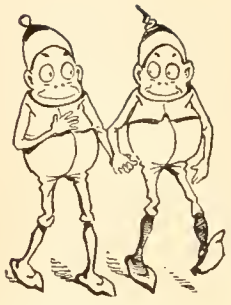




The well timed tap,
that told so much,
Proved knowledge was
behind the touch,
The pull at intervals,
so stout,
Told what instruction
can bring out,
While no wild discord,
hard to hear,
Was forced upon
the troubled ear.
Within their stalls
the cattle rose,
The horses neighed,
the story goes,
The fowl upon their
roost awoke
And crowed, upon
the earliest
stroke,



While children questions asked that none
Could answer at the rise of sun.
And though in haste men gained the hill,
When they arrived, the church was still.
The sound had hardly died away
From largest bells, the foremost say,
Still not a cunning Brownie sprite
Around the building was in sight.
They marveled at the wonder great—
How came those bells of size and weight
Within that belfry, high in air,
And not a human being there.



One, single-handed,
much may do
But devils shake when
facing two.



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